



QUICK TIP

Activities 3 & 4 work well
when run in succession

SETTING INTENTION

ACTIVITY 3 - WHAT IS HAPPINESS?



What you need:

Images depicting what happiness could be
Two video clips from the documentary Happy

Rationale:

This is a great visual way to explore what's important for the young people. The engagement with this activity tends to be very high and so it acts as a powerful way to open up discussion and exploration early in the programme. It also acts to nurture the young people's intention to engage in the content of the SOMA Programme; through this activity we recognize that we all want to be happy, the question then becomes how. The answer - SOMA!

Instructions:

Break the young people into groups of 2-5.

Hand out folders containing approximately 20 images depicting a variety of human experiences. These will depict the various elements of SOMA - social connection, openness to enjoyment, meaning and purpose, and action. But they will also contain images that evoke materialism, status, reputation, and beauty. As such the images contain a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic sources of happiness. This provokes conversation and exploration.

The groups then have 5 minutes to identify 5 images that depict what is most important to happiness. While the groups are working on this it is helpful to walk around and make sure everyone is included. One of the stipulations at the outset, is that everyone in the group has to agree on what their top 5 are. This forces discussion, and forces them to consider alternative points of view.

Once the groups have settled on their top 5, if there is ample time, and if the groups are not that many (perhaps up to 3), you can have each group share what they chose. You could also invite them to disagree with each other if there are marked differences. If there's not time or if there are many groups and young people it may be easier to simply move to the next element in this activity.

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The next instruction is that they have to reduce these 5 to just 2. They now have just 2 minutes to settle on their top 2. You can then explore what each group chose and why.

It can be useful to ask: "What one change would bring more happiness to your life?" Invite the young people to share in pairs and then explore in a large group. This question brings deeper discussion and provides an opportunity for you to get to know the young people better - what stresses them out etc.

This activity finishes with a mini-lecture as follows:



So one of the things we can learn from this activity is that there can be many different ways to be happy, and different people will choose different ways to become happy. What's important to some, is not important to others, and vice versa. What is clear, however, is that we all want to be happy. What's more, even though we may find happiness in different things, there's a common thread. For instance, we saw a lot of people choose other people as an important source of happiness - whether friends or family. That reflects something deep and true about human beings - we are social creatures. We find happiness with others. In fact, there are some important threads that are true for all of us and we're going to explore that more in this course.

We can also have perceptions about what's important to happiness, but they may not be accurate. For instance, we might get the message from social media or advertising that we should be happy all the time. But we know with a little reflection that's not realistic. What's more, our society obsesses about getting lots of money as the key to happiness, but in actual fact we may have been drawn to things that don't cost much at all.

I want to show you a clip now that gives some important information on happiness...