

## *Newsletter No. 6*

### **Workshop in November**

#### **“Positive Psychology in ELT: Bringing the Science of Happiness to the classroom”**

**Date:** November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021 10:30-12:00, 13:00-14:30

**Venue:** NUFS Meieki Campus (BIZrium Nagoya, Noritakeshin-machi, Nishi Ward, Nagoya)

**Presenter:** Marc Helgesen (Miyagi Gakuin Women’s University)

He is the author of many article and books including “English Teaching and the Science of Happiness: Positive psychology communication activities for language learning.” (ABAX) and the “English Firsthand” series (Pearson). He has been an invited speaker to conferences on five continents. He formerly taught “ELT and the Science of Happiness” in the MA TESOL program at NUFS.



#### **Abstract:**

Positive Psychology (TIME magazine calls it “The Science of Happiness”) is the study of positive emotion - the things that make life good. How can we bring that to the ELT classroom? And how can we connect the ideas to language goals and tasks? As teachers, it helps to know how what we do affects our learners’ brains. Emotion triggers dopamine...and that builds motivation, memory and focus. Serotonin - the happiness hormone - has many triggers: feeling respected, exercise, praise for effort all lead to a positive class culture. Cortisol - be careful. That’s the stress hormone! Yet it is useful. We don’t need to remember the science terms, just what we can do in the classroom. What about younger learners? We’ll introduce the University of Wisconsin’s Kindness curriculum, a set of activities that stimulate mindfulness in children. (Yes! It is easy and fun.) Finally, we’ll look at ways to go deeper, both in frequency (quick activities - teachers are already too busy) and complexity. Join us. You’ll be happy you did.....

**The number of participants: 27**

## 1. Interesting activities you might want to use in your class. Why?

- I enjoyed ‘Alphabreaths’ very much. I think doing gestures is a kind of exercise (moving body) and kids can learn basic words starting from A to Z. When I teach children, I always think it’s important to have both moving activities and quiet activities.
- Remember good things – I’d like to use the ‘invisible photo gallery’ activity. The activity is not only interesting but also good for their health.
- I really liked the ABCD breathing activity, which I think I could apply into my classes as cooperative group work. I think it was great for having students work together, and at the same time they can move around.
- I have actually been using Marc’s questions for warmup activities, and they work great! I’d like to use the ‘5 pictures’ activity in my class, Students will enjoy talking about pictures on their phones.
- I was impressed with the activity classed ‘alphabreaths’. Not only students but also teachers need to have chances to breathe deeply during the class.



## 2. What you learned from today’s workshop

- Various subtle ways to positively influence my young students. They don’t have to know the science, but just as a fun activity.
- I learned that emotion influences how you learn. I think that happy learners are more motivated and simply enjoy their learning. I want my students to have fun learning English so today’s workshop helped me a lot.
- Happy students learn more! I’d like to design my lessons with positive psychology point of view.
- English teachers can make students happy at any moment during classes. So, I’ll do (and actually I’m doing) that as often as possible. I’ll convey as many positive words as possible to my students.
- Happy people 1) remember good things, 2) say ‘thank you’, 3) do kind things, 4) take time with friends and family, 5) forgive, 6) stay healthy, 7) notice good things, 8) deal with problems.

## 3. Questions and Answers

*1) Do you encounter students who do not follow your Positive Psychology class when you try to use the activities you presented during the workshop? How can this be applied to teaching adults? Like the mindfulness techniques for business people?*

**Marc:** Actually I don’t have special positive psychology classes. Most of them are just regular English classes. My home department is in the Dept. of Modern Business. I also teach classes in the Elementary Education Dept where I include things like the Kindness Curriculum which is relevant to their major

and interests. I mainly do shorter activities. AFTER the activity, I point out the positive psychology. They can see if it connects to their interests and lives or not. Many see that it does. I often do the “happiness dictation” (it was the green handout in your packet Saturday) early in the year. A few weeks later, I do “happiness haiku.” They recycle the same topics. You can see some of their haiku at <https://www.eltandhappiness.com/happiness-haiku-consolidation.html>



It is pretty easy to make the connection between positive psychology and business. Business is one area that has embraced positive psychology. Here’s a series of books from Harvard Business Review that I sometimes lend to (motivated) students [https://www.amazon.co.jp/-/en/Harvard-Business-Review/dp/1633696219/ref=sr\\_1\\_11?keywords=harvard+business+review+positive+psychology&qid=1636503691&s=english-books&sr=1-11](https://www.amazon.co.jp/-/en/Harvard-Business-Review/dp/1633696219/ref=sr_1_11?keywords=harvard+business+review+positive+psychology&qid=1636503691&s=english-books&sr=1-11)

2) *When you talked about ‘BDNF’, you said something like ‘exercise increases our memory’. In high school, it is said that students are not concentrated in the class after PE. Among teachers the periods are the least popular. Why is this happening? And how can we improve the situation?*

**Marc:** I worry that I might have oversimplified that part. I certainly believe everything Dr. John Ratey (Harvard) is saying about exercise. But he approaches exercise in a special way. He describes a wonderful P.E. program in Naperville, Illinois (Suburb of Chicago). All the kids have something like a Fitbit. They get grades based on how much their heartbeats. So the natural athletes don’t necessarily get the best grades. The kids who work the hardest do. (I never liked PE as a Jr. High and Sr. High student – I was never a good athlete). If students have a PE class where they are running laps for an hour, then have your English class, they probably need a break more than more exercise. I’d probably start with something like an Energy Break that doesn’t require regular exercises (like we did Saturday). Maybe start with one of the songs. <https://helgesenhandouts.weebly.com/energy-breaks1.html>

If they are really tired, I wouldn’t have them sit down the whole class. They’ll go to sleep. See some of the ideas at <https://helgesenhandouts.weebly.com/physical-activity-in-the-elt-class.html>

I would love to see more PE teachers (any teachers, really, read John Ratey’s Spark [https://www.amazon.co.jp/-/en/Dr-John-J-Ratey/dp/1849161577/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=ratey+spark&qid=1636504355&s=english-books&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.co.jp/-/en/Dr-John-J-Ratey/dp/1849161577/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=ratey+spark&qid=1636504355&s=english-books&sr=1-1)

The Japanese version is at [https://www.amazon.co.jp/-/en/gp/product/B00JDLBEFW?storeType=ebooks&ref=msw\\_c\\_1849161577\\_rwt\\_hgbx\\_mbt\\_p\\_img](https://www.amazon.co.jp/-/en/gp/product/B00JDLBEFW?storeType=ebooks&ref=msw_c_1849161577_rwt_hgbx_mbt_p_img)

Another book on exercise I like is [https://www.amazon.co.jp/-/en/Wendy-Suzuki-ebook/dp/B00L7X6ZLM/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=wendy+suzuki+happy+life&qid=1636504526&s=english-books&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.co.jp/-/en/Wendy-Suzuki-ebook/dp/B00L7X6ZLM/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=wendy+suzuki+happy+life&qid=1636504526&s=english-books&sr=1-1)

### 3) *How young can you do the 'kindness curriculum' with children?*

**Marc:** The kindness curriculum is designed for preschoolers so probably ages 3-5. It comes from Wisconsin in the USA so is designed for native-speakers. But any program in the USA has some ESL students so most things work well for EFL as well. I find, in Japan, stuff designed for younger learners usually works well for slightly older kids (elementary school).

I probably would NOT use it with JHS or HS students. I think it would seem childish. I do use parts of it with my university students who are elementary education and early childhood development majors – but it works because of their interest in kids.



My webpage on the topic, with links is at <https://www.eltandhappiness.com/mindfulness-for-kids.html>

I have another page for my El.Ed. majors that has things like yoga breathing for kids at <https://mgjidoego.weebly.com/>

### 4) *Do you still teach a mater's course on positive psychology?*

**Marc:** Unfortunately, no. I wish I could but NUFS (like most Japanese universities) has a mandatory retirement age and I am too old to teach a regular course. I still have a page (3 pages, actually) on my website that I used for the course. There are many links there:

<https://www.eltandhappiness.com/nufs-ma-tesol-task-page.html>

If you want, I could send you the PowerPoints I used. They are too big for regular email but I can send them via “WeTransfer.com”. Send me an email ([marchelgesen@gmail.com](mailto:marchelgesen@gmail.com)) and I'll send them to you.

Good luck with your teaching and your life. I wish you great success and happiness.

## AR Discussion

**Date:** November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021, 14:45-17:30

**Title:** Group discussion on action research

**Advisers:** Kazuyoshi Sato (NUFS), Duane Kindt (NUFS),  
Juanita Heigham

**The number of participants:** 15

