



Practical Ways to Integrate Wellbeing into Special Education for Teachers and Students

A presentation by Patricia Wright, Katie Curran, & Jamie Evanko on March 20, 2024.

Kathleen 00:01:

So, since most of you are now here, to those of you who just joined us, good afternoon and welcome to today's webinar, Practical Ways to Integrate Wellbeing into Special Education for Teachers and Students.

00:14:

My name is Kathleen and I'm your host for today's event. It's great to have you all here today. I have the distinct pleasure of introducing today's speakers, Patricia Wright, Katie Curran, and Ivanka from Proof Positive.

00:28:

These professionals join us as our partner from Proof Positive, and we are delighted to have them with us. Without further ado, I'll now turn it over to the Proof Positive team. So go ahead and take it away.

Patricia Wright 00:45:

Kathleen, thank you so much for the introduction and really, I just would like to thank OAR for this invitation to share.

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OAR has had a really long history of being committed to the autism community and promoting wellbeing through their grants programs and their incredible scholarship programs.

01:01:

And really I'd also just like to highlight the relationships they support between peers with some of their curriculum and materials that I know many teachers, probably some of you who are on here, have used in your classrooms to ensure the wellbeing of the autistic people that you support and the community that surrounds them.

01:17:

My name's Patricia Wright. I'm the executive Director of Proof Positive and I've been involved in autism services and supports for a few decades, and I am delighted to be able to share information and really introduce the content expert, my colleague Katie here around wellbeing.

01:34:

I feel like throughout my career, I started out as a special educator and still identify as an educator. I was really good about teaching skills. And I'm not so sure I was good at addressing an individual's wellbeing.

01:48:

And I think about the adult outcomes that are currently happening for the autism community and our need for promoting additional inclusive practices.

01:57:

And I think if we use some of these wellbeing practices and skills and we're a little bit more intentional about teaching wellbeing, that the autism community and autistic individuals might be in a different place.

02:10:

So I am delighted to be able to introduce Katie, who has really been working at the intersection of wellbeing and autism intervention, also for decades, a few Less than me, but also for a very long time.

02:25:

And then Jamie, who's going to be joining us at the end of the presentation, who's a classroom teacher and is able to share some great stories of application with us as well. So the three of us are joining you.

02:36:

And we also are, please answer, ask questions, post them in. Jamie and I are going to be answering questions behind the scenes while Katie presents. So have at it Katie, tell us what we can do to improve the wellbeing of the autism community.

Katie Curran 02:50:

Awesome. Patricia, thank you for the warm welcome and thank you to OAR for hosting. It is an exciting day not just because we believe everyday should be about happiness, but because today is actually the International Day of Happiness.

03:08:

So we get to partner with OAR, and present this webinar on a day that the United Nations has named the day we all will be thinking about focusing on and targeting happiness. So it is a really exciting day to be here.

03:27:

We know that there are millions of people around the world today thinking about happiness, but we also know that there is a void in that conversation, that people with disabilities, including those with autism, have all but been left out of the wellbeing movement to date.

03:50:

So we're here today to say we want to be a part of that conversation. We want you to join us in celebrating the International Day of Happiness as a disability partner to the UN and the organizations around the globe that are celebrating the International Day of Happiness.

04:09:

And while this is one day, we want to be doing this work with you in partnership with organizations, individuals, families, every day. So to kick us off today, we're going to give you the opportunity to reflect on happiness a bit.

04:26:

And we have our partner organizations around the country doing this exact exercise with their staff, with their students, encouraging families to partake, simply stopping and thinking about happiness as more than just one emotion.

04:45:

But there are really 10 plus positive emotions that can be used to describe states of happiness. So to introduce the idea of positive emotions to the autism community, we've asked people to do this exercise.

05:01:

So if you will play along and in the chat or the Q and A, wherever you can sort of access first, take a moment and just think about what kind of happiness are you feeling today?

05:14:

Which of these 10 positive emotions have you experienced? And if not today, recently? And maybe a note about why. So today for me, I am hopeful, we get to come together with a group.

05:31:

We know that there are people all over the world focused on happiness that bring such hope for the possibility of a world where wellbeing wins for all.

05:43:

So in the chat, just tell us what kind of happy you are. Patricia, I know you're looking at the chat, so if you want to call out some of the emotions you're seeing, go ahead.

Patricia Wright 05:59:

You bet. Well, I started it off to say interest because I'm always engaged to learn and this is why I personally go to webinars. So I'm excited to learn myself. So I'll kind of watch here as people get the chance to put into the chat or the questions.

06:13:

Oh, here we go. Interest, satisfied, successful morning at school. Well, every teacher can appreciate that. Gratitude.

06:23:

Abigail said, same interest and hope. Jackie, who we know. Inspiration, my passion for teaching the skill of happiness is contagious, and my staff and students are so engaged. Thank you Jackie.

06:37:

Keeps coming in. Happy family. Wow. Okay.

Katie Curran 06:42:

Love this. It's a simple way to introduce the idea that there are lots of ways to feel good and that we should be pausing every day and thinking about what it means when we feel good.

06:55:

What positive emotion is that? So, Jackie, I know you in your classroom today have been introducing your team and students to this exact exercise.

07:05:

We have made resources, whether your students or you would prefer a file folder activity or just a place to write your reflection or some flashcards or a poster to put up.

07:18:

Feel free to access the QR code for an array of activities that will enable you to introduce positive emotions to your students, to think about them more deeply for yourself.

07:31:

And if not today, run this activity tomorrow or next week. There's no time that isn't good to stop and pause and reflect on what kind of happy you are.

07:44:

So that brings us to the science and skills of happiness. Our mission at Proof Positive is to spread the science and skills of happiness in and around the autism community.

07:57:

We believe in a future where wellbeing wins for all. And we know that the beginning of that future starts with behavior change at the individual level that we can each engage in practices, habits, routines that enable us to collectively enhance our wellbeing.

08:22:

So how do we do that? Positive Psychology, which is the study of the good life, gives us the science and skills. Positive Psychology is the scientific study of who we are at our best.

08:39:

It shines the light on the strengths and virtues of humans such that we can get more of it. It studies the conditions, the processes that enable individuals, groups, communities to thrive and flourish.

08:56:

So Positive Psych is truly the study of who are we at our best? How do we get more of it? The field launched about 30 years ago, and in that time, researchers have developed a solid understanding of the critical elements of thriving and flourishing.

09:18:

We know that PERMA Plus, these six elements are critical to your happiness, wellbeing, and, and thriving. We know that when people have a healthy dose of positive emotions day in and day out, they are well.

09:38:

We know that having high levels of engagement, that you spend time doing the things that sort of enable you to feel a sense of flow will improve your wellbeing. We know that other people matter.

09:53:

Relationships are critical to our wellbeing. Mattering, a sense of purpose of connecting to something larger than yourself, really important to thriving and flourishing.

10:08:

We know that accomplishments, setting goals, achieving those goals, feeling optimistic about the outcomes, are critically important to your future wellbeing.

10:18:

And then of course, we can't leave out health because at Proof Positive and in the literature, we know that there is a strong mind-body connection.

10:27:

And so getting good sleep, feeding our bodies healthy nutrition, making sure we're moving enough, all of these components come together to enable us to live a life of wellbeing.

10:41:

So the PERMA Plus theory of Wellbeing says we need to be taking intentional action, that we need to be practicing the skills that feed these six elements in order to thrive and flourish.

10:57:

And I love this quote because even the early founders, so Martin Seligman, named here in 2005, said that even those that carry the weightiest psychological burdens, strive for much more than the relief of their suffering.

11:17:

Positive Psychology is not about fixing what's wrong, it's about getting more of what's right. And this quote tells us that everyone, regardless of where they are, who they are, diagnosis or not, seeks a life of thriving and flourishing.

11:38:

We all want more than the reliefs of suffering. So Positive Psych tells us not how to go from negative 10 to zero, but zero to plus 10, by targeting those elements of wellbeing.

11:54:

So today, because we believe behavior change is how you get there, we believe that engaging in daily practice exercises is how you're going to shift your wellbeing. We're going to teach you three skills in this webinar.

12:08:

The goal is that these skills are easily accessible to all. That we are going to practice them together while we're here. This will be an active webinar.

12:18:

And then we're going to show you how to teach them to the people in your life, whether that's teaching them at your dinner table, teaching them in a meeting, or teaching them in a classroom or in a therapeutic setting.

12:29:

So skill number one, today is a skill called What Went Well. This is all about the practice of gratitude. Gratitude is fantastic for many things, but you don't have to wait for it to come to you.

12:44:

You can practice this skill and train your brain to get better at noticing, tracking, paying attention to, and remembering the good things that happen every day.

12:58:

This was one of the very first Positive Psychology practices and research showed that people who pause and ask themselves what went well, they write down three-ish good things a day, 2, 3, 4, 5, good things a day, and live longer, healthier lives.

13:19:

They fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer. You might be wondering how in the world could it be that writing down a few good things benefit sleep? Sleep is a precious commodity.

13:32:

Well, if you think about falling asleep last night, how many of us laid down in bed and we couldn't turn off the brain thinking about the to-do list, all the things we didn't get done, something that we heard during the day that upset us.

13:48:

Our brains are hardwired to think about what went wrong, the negative. This is called the Negativity Bias. So without intentionally counteracting the negativity bias as you're trying to fall asleep, as you're

walking through your day trying to perform your job or interact with one another, you are predisposed to focus on the negative.

14:11:

So this skill, asking yourself what went well, shuts off those negative thoughts and focuses your brain on the good, which is a bit counterintuitive to the human brain, the way we're hardwired.

14:26:

And there's a good evolutionary sort of understanding of why we have the negativity bias. But what we know is it's not helping us sleep, it's not helping us perform that we need to sort of strike a balance and get in the habit of asking ourselves what went well?

14:44:

We'll perform better at school and work. People who engage in this practice have stronger relationships. Why? Because if you train your brain to ask what went well, to spot the good every day, you might just start seeing the good in those around you, rather than what irritates you or what's annoying about that person.

15:09:

Can you train your brain to see and share the good you see in others? And this last finding we know is critically important. People who engage in the daily practice of answering what went well, are less depressed and anxious.

15:25:

And the original research on this was folks that kept a What Went Well Journal for two weeks, and had less depressive symptoms six months later. So profound benefit for the many people that are struggling with depression and anxiety.

15:42:

And we all know this webinar could be a full hour on the mental health crisis in our country and around the globe, but today is the international day of happiness. So we're going to focus on skills that can actually help, that can be a part of the solution.

15:57:

And this is one. So how do you practice the skill of What Went Well? You can start right now. In the chat or the Q and A, go ahead and just ask yourself what went well today, what has already gone well for you?

16:13:

And put it in. These can be small things, big things, anything you'd be willing to share. And Patricia, I'd ask you to do the same. Just sort of read those as they come through.

16:25:

I can get us started. Just before this webinar started. It has been a very gray day here in the northeast of the United States. The sun came out for a few minutes and I was able to stand in the sun, and just enjoy a little sunshine before the webinar, which was a great thing on this day.

Patricia Wright 16:45:

Nelly just came in with, I made a delicious pot of soup, which I also appreciate. Oh, nice. Restorative chat with student ended well, and I ate my lunch. That was Miss Maura.

16:59:

Good eye appointment. No macular degeneration, no glaucoma. That's interesting, right? The absence of something that's bad is feeling great. Cat sitting in the sun. A really great range of things here.

17:11:

Warmer weather, a hundred percent Christine, right there with you. Parent meeting that went well. There's a lot of good stuff going on, Katie.

Katie Curran 17:19:

Love this. Patricia, I'm going to anchor for a minute to what you said, the sort of absence of a bad thing leading to what went well. For those of you that work with teenagers and kids, I have taught this skill in many, many schools to many, many kids of different ages.

17:39:

And it is interesting how particularly teenagers can get a little resistant to telling you what went well. A great way to get them practicing gratitude is exactly that, Patricia.

17:54:

It's called a subtraction exercise, where you have them think about something important in their life. Maybe it's the sport they love, a family member or a pet they love or access to transportation.

18:06:

And you sort of have them imagine their life without that. Well, what if you couldn't play soccer anymore? And in many ways, COVID-19 did this for all of us, right?

18:16:

We started to appreciate things we might have previously been taking for granted because on a dime they disappeared. We couldn't go to the grocery store, we couldn't do some of the things that we are typically able to do in our daily lives.

18:30:

So for teenagers in particular, having them subtract out something and then all of a sudden they're grateful for it, is a really interesting way to get creative at helping them focus on what went well.

18:43:

So the absence of bad is absolutely possible. Imagine you in your life without something you have, can help you not take it for granted. The instructions are here.

18:55:

What I am going to encourage you to do, if this is a practice you would like to engage in, set a timer or put it on your calendar. Give yourself some sort of environmental cue that reminds you to do it each day until you're in the habit.

19:13:

When I started practicing this skill 15 years ago, I left my gratitude journal sitting next to my coffee pot. It was there for three or four years. I practiced in the morning when I woke up.

19:25:

So I would press go on my coffee pot and jot down what went well the day before while my coffee was brewing. That got me in the habit of practicing in the morning. But set a timer so that you remember to do it.

19:38:

And for bonus points, share your good stuff with a friend or family member. Make it a habit to ask one another What Went Well? Open your next team meeting by asking folks to focus on something that went well that day or something that went well that week.

19:57:

This can shift the tone of a meeting. It can shift the tone of an interaction with a student or an interaction with a parent. Imagine opening even an IEP meeting with a What Went Well, reflection and everyone sharing some things that have gone well from the year.

20:13:

So there's lots of ways to get creative. Start on your own, as you get better at it, share it with others. Speaking of which, share it with your students. So some of you're familiar with our website, some of you are new to us today.

20:31:

We are doing our best to package the science and skills of happiness in a way that is accessible to all. So on our website, you will find seven skills to date that are complete with unit studies, worksheets, standalone activities, and lots of visual ways to access the skills.

20:51:

So if you have students who have less language, limited language, we are trying to modify and adapt to them as well. So in our skills center, which we'll have a link at the end of this presentation too, or Patricia might want to put that in the link for you.

21:08:

There are plenty of resources. Everything's in a Google Drive, so it should be easily accessible. If not, reach out to us directly hello@proofpositive.org. And we will most certainly make sure your students have access to anything you would like to teach.

21:25:

So once you've started practicing, share with others and start teaching if you are in a teaching role. Skill number two, this is a fun one, Jolts of Joy. So Jolts of Joy is about intentionally experiencing higher levels of positive emotion across your day.

21:46:

Not waiting for those positive emotions to come find you, but intentionally seeking them out yourself. Creating a habit of Jolting Joy into your life.

22:01:

This is the work of Barbara Frederickson. Dr. Frederickson is at UNC. She's got an amazing lab there. She was the first researcher in history to ask the question, what good are positive emotions?

22:22:

So we know why we feel things like fear and anxiety, survival. If you can spot danger, you can avoid it. Fight, flight, freeze, fawn. These are all terms we're familiar with. It is the beneficial nature of negative emotions.

22:41:

But up until about 20 years ago, we had no idea why as human beings, we feel things like serenity, love, joy, gratitude, inspiration. And it was Dr. Frederickson that said, why do what good are these Positive Emotions?

23:00:

If negative emotions keep us alive in dangerous situations, Positive Emotions must have a function. And you see here just a brief summary of the hundreds of studies that have come out of her lab since then.

23:15:

And what she's essentially found is that Positive Emotions indeed play a critical role in not only our survival, but our thriving Positive Emotions open our minds and protect our bodies.

23:31:

They enable us to think creatively, to solve problems faster. Our visual perceptions actually shift. We see more. We physically see more with our eyes when we've been induced with Positive Emotions.

23:48:

We think more globally. We are more accepting of diversity. And again, Positive Emotions and healthy doses of them prevent depression and anxiety. They also protect our hearts.

24:00:

Positive Emotions have something called the undoing effect. If you're like many of us, you've probably felt stress, and you've probably felt stress recently and maybe more than you want to.

24:14:

And stress has negative effects on our bodies. Turns out Positive Emotions undo the negative physiological effects of negative emotions. The undoing effect. What does that mean?

24:30:

If I can induce a little bit of playfulness and humor, when you are stressed out, if I can get you just laughing, giggling, smiling, your heart rate immediately slows. The cortisol running through your body reduces, you physically relax.

24:49:

So Positive Emotions literally undo the effects of negative emotions and they help you sleep and they improve our blood pressure and our heart rate. So lots of benefits to Positive Emotions.

25:01:

You can sum all of this up. And Dr. Frederickson has as the Broaden and Build Theory, that positive emotions quite literally broaden and build our resources. So we want more of them.

25:15:

And in a world where we are sort of constantly bombarded with the news and negative media and lots of stuff coming at us, and we have to be intentional about broadening and building our resources by feeling good.

25:32:

So how do we do that? We do that by practicing Jolts of Joy. So once again, we're going to start doing it together. But this is something that hopefully if you choose to, you'll engage in as an active habit, practice routine or ritual in your own life.

25:50:

So for today, I'd like you in the chat or the Q and A to just give us a few ways, if you stop and think, what are some quick ways I can always experience a positive emotion?

26:05:

Maybe it's a favorite song you listen to or a favorite playlist. You know, when that playlist goes on, you feel more hopeful. Maybe it's a picture.

26:17:

Is there a picture on your phone that you know, every time you look at it, you just can't help but smile or feel a little love in your heart? Maybe it's a quick text exchange, maybe it's a game you play on your phone.

26:29:

But go ahead and give us like, what are some jolts of joy in your life? And Patricia, once again, if you wouldn't mind reading those out as they come in.

Patricia Wright 26:37:

Yeah, so Katie, as soon as you said that one, and maybe it's a picture I thought about Jamie, who you guys will meet in a little bit, and it's definitely a picture of her daughter. Like we know that when she glances down at her phone and sees the picture of her daughter on the wallpaper, she gets a big smile.

26:52:

So Avery, three minute quick dance party. Oh, this is a good one. Finishing a task, especially a tough one, is funny. New York Times mini crossword.

27:07:

Oh, that's cool. My favorite song. Absolutely. Music is a big one.

Katie Curran 27:14:

Well, and interestingly, music can actually inspire different emotions. So Avery, who is a member of our team has done a really nice job on our Spotify place of curating playlists that feed different positive emotions.

27:30:

So there's a joy playlist, a love playlist, a hope playlist, a serenity playlist. So if music is one of yours, check out our Spotify page and see if you might not like a playlist or if you don't want to build one similar for yourself.

27:45:

I also love that, accomplishing a task, that gives us pride, right? Which is not something we often go after intentionally, but I like that we're getting a variety of Positive Emotions.

Patricia Wright 27:57:

Yep. And then there's always the coffee, coffee and treats at work.

Katie Curran 28:02:

Coffee and treats at work.

Patricia Wright 28:03:

Who doesn't like that? Who doesn't like that? That's a Jolt of Joy.

Katie Curran 28:07:

Certainly. And so what we encourage you to do is make a list of 10 plus ways that you, you know, sort of fail proof, you know, they will trigger positive emotions for you.

28:21:

Then post that somewhere you will see it every day and challenge yourself three times a day, pause and engage in a Jolt of Joy. This last bullet point, consider how you can be a Jolt of Joy for others.

28:36:

I think for us as educators, as parents, as humans, our first job in every interaction is to induce joy. We know that joy opens the mind. We know that joy opens the heart.

28:56:

So if we are trying to help people learn, right? We want our students' minds opened so that they can learn. What shifts?

29:06:

If it is your first job in every interaction with every student, before you're worried about the content or the goal or what you're trying to achieve, you just think about how can I be a Jolt of Joy for this student?

29:22:

When a colleague comes to talk to you, what does it mean to be a Jolt of Joy for them? What does it mean to be a Jolt of Joy when you walk into your house or when you sit down at the dinner table or when you connect with friends?

29:34:

So really starting to think about not only how do you induce positive emotion in yourself, how can you be a Jolt of Joy for others? Because I think as humans we just need more of this and it will help us connect.

29:47:

It will help us sort of counter the loneliness epidemic. It will help us all feel better and who doesn't want a little bit more joy? So thinking about not only how to be a Jolt of Joy for yourself, but also for others.

30:01:

And so what you might want to do is think about the people closest to you, your students, your colleagues, your spouses, your significant others, your best friends and siblings.

30:14:

Think about what are ways that you know, always get them feeling good and keep that list top of mind too the next time you interact with them, see if you can't have a little bit more joy in those interactions.

30:27:

And once again, we have a whole unit introducing Positive Emotions and helping students access the skill of Jolts of Joy. So please visit the skill center, download.

30:38:

And again, if you have any questions or feedback, we are so eager to learn with you and from you. If you're implementing something with a student, it's not quite working, you need additional resources, reach out.

30:52:

That is what we are here for. Alright, skill number three, Showcase the Good. Showcase the Good is all about building strong relationships.

31:08:

Many of us were raised to believe that strong relationships are built on showing up for each other when things go wrong.

31:20:

And while it is important that we show up and offer social support, the research actually says what is most critical to thriving and flourishing relationships?

31:33:

What sets great relationships apart from okay relationships is how you answer the question, will you be there for me when things go right? Will you show up for me when things go right?

31:51:

And so that is an interesting question. Will you show up for me? Will you celebrate the good with me? And so when researchers realized that that was critical to thriving relationships, they dug in to try and understand how is it that we respond when people share good news with us?

32:10:

What do we do when someone comes to us with their little gift of joy, they bring us their good news. And I wish I could tell you that we are really, really good at showing up for each other when things go right.

32:31:

But the truth is there's four ways people respond to good news. And this is the work of Shelly Gable at UCLA. She tells us that three of the ways we respond when someone shares good news with us, actually damage relationships.

32:51:

Only one, Active Constructive responding enhances relationships. So I'm going to give you a little example here that will just sort of demonstrate and hopefully you can relate.

33:04:

Many people start feeling a sense of like, oh boy, guilt as they're listening, or geez, that's exactly what my mother-in-law does. All emotions are fair as we walk through these examples, we have all responded in all four ways.

33:18:

And we are all here to learn together, so we will do better once we know better. So the example I'm going to give is, your son or daughter runs through the door and says, mom, dad, look, I got a 90 on my math test.

33:33:

What you might say is, good job, well done. I'm proud of you. That would be Passive Constructive. Quiet, understated, support. You're sort of happy for them, but the conversation doesn't have anywhere to go.

33:53:

The person who shared the news, your son or daughter is left sort of going, huh? Is it that good? Right? And they maybe walk away with their test conversation over.

34:06:

Passive Destructive. Your son or daughter runs through the door, mom, dad, look, I got a 90 on my math test. Do you have your shin guards we're late for soccer practice. Boom, you changed the channel. Oh, did we ever run to Walgreens? We still need that poster board.

34:22:

You've changed the channel, right? You didn't even hear the good news. These are the one uppers you tell a friend, you're going to the shore for the weekend and they say, oh, I've been meaning to tell you I'm going to Hawaii for two weeks. Now how do you feel about your shore trip for the weekend? Right?

34:37:

So Passive Destructive, we tend to take the spotlight off of the good news and shift it to ourselves or something else. And again, not intentionally, but we may have missed the good news.

34:50:

We had something else on our mind. We're just caught up in the busyness of the day. Passive Destructive, not good for the relationship or the person that shared the good news. What about Active Destructive, someone chooses you, they bring you their good news.

35:08:

Your son or daughter runs through the door. Mom, dad, look, I got a 90 on my math test. A 90, what'd you get wrong? I thought we studied hard for this, show me the ones you got wrong.

35:21:

We should practice those, right? Elaborates the concerns, quashes how does that child feel about what they thought was their good news? And we do this to one another on little things. We do these on sort of bigger good news.

35:36:

People share that they're moving, they got a new job. If the news impacts us in any way, it can be easy to be Active Destructive.

35:46:

Damages the relationship. Is that child more or less likely to run in and share their next piece of good news with you? Less likely. So we're here to learn how to do it right.

35:59:

The skill is getting really, really, really good at the one response style that actually builds stronger relationships. So the research says when someone comes to you, when they share their good news with you, all you have to do is authentically engage in such a way that you show interest in the good news.

36:24:

You want to become a joy multiplier, you want to highlight the good, dig in, ask questions. So your son or daughter runs through the door. Mom, dad, I got to 90 on my math test. Oh, let's take a look at it. What'd the teacher say when she handed it back?

36:41:

How do you feel about your preparation? I know you studied really hard. What did it look like when you were reviewing this? Like, how did that feel? Right? So you're building up this good news, you're showcasing it, you're shining the light on it.

36:55:

You're putting down your phone, you're turning away from distractions, and you're connecting. Who benefits? Both people.

37:07:

The research says that in an Active Constructive interaction, when one person is brave enough to share their good news, to bring their joy to you, and you respond by asking questions, leaning in, learning more, reliving the positive, both people get a boost to their wellbeing.

37:29:

So it increases wellbeing, it increases the sort of memory of the positive event. It builds trust and it builds stronger social connections. So this is a really fun skill to practice.

37:44:

I would ask you as you're getting started, it is so easy for many of us to reflect on all the people in our lives and how they get it wrong. Don't do that. Focus on yourself.

37:58:

Think about, who are the people in your life? Who do you care the most about? The people that you live with, the people that you love, the people that you work with.

38:09:

Where do you want, how do you want to respond to them? So if you were to put their names in these boxes, where would their names go? How do you typically respond to their good news?

38:23:

And what could you draw on? What strengths of your own, maybe your own curiosity, or maybe you love to learn, you could learn more about the person. What strengths could you draw on?

38:35:

What strategies could you put in place for yourself to be a joy multiplier? So just like every other skill we have got resources.

38:47:

If you want to print off and sort of post those four boxes at your dinner table or in your office or on your desk, they're there for you. Use them as a visual reminder to cue in to focus on the good, to showcase the good when people share their good news with you.

39:07:

Likewise, start teaching your students that it's fun to share good news. Get them to share good news. Get them responding with Active Constructive responding. This is another skill where we have done some work to try and figure out how to make it accessible to all.

39:26:

So dig in, play with the resources, explore them with your students, and if you have questions, feedback concerns, come to us. We want to work with you. We want to partner on getting this right for as many as possible.

39:40:

So I've given you three skills. I've told you that I envision a world where wellbeing wins for all. And I think these three skills are the path there that we at Proof Positive, the researchers in the Positive Psychology field believe this, but does it work?

39:57:

What are parents saying? What are teachers saying? What are our partners saying? So I will share with you that this is the quote of a parent, their child is now 16, diagnosed with autism.

40:13:

And they saw all of the best interventions, they saw all of the best treatments. And like many of us, they believed that once their son was successful, he would find happiness. And what they realized is that that was actually backwards.

40:31:

That when they found the science and skills of happiness, when he started thriving and flourishing, success followed that his skill acquisition skyrocketed.

40:44:

He learned more, he made more friends, he had more interests once he was happy. So this is the quote of one parent. We have heard this story from many more at this point.

40:58:

We would love to hear your stories, but this quote says, happiness ought to be a target in and of itself because when we enable our students to be happy, success follows. Patricia, I'm going to turn it over to you to talk about the pilot study

Patricia Wright 41:20:

Super. And we actually, Jackie, who I mentioned, there you are, I don't think you knew we'd be sharing a picture of you. So we are also interested in learning from our partners as an organization, as a nonprofit organization.

41:34:

And we work collaboratively with others, as Katie said. So Epic is a school that's in New Jersey and we were really interested in how the skills of well being would impact teacher well being.

41:45:

So we talk about student wellbeing, but we also know teachers and educators are really kind of struggling right now. So we collected some data on our PERMA Profiler which is just a standard measure of subjective well being, looking at baseline in six weeks and six months, and kind of seeing what we can do to impact.

42:03:

This is really early data. The only kind of interesting data point for this graph is around loneliness. It seems that practicing the skills of wellbeing as a school organization actually decreases loneliness. Which is kind of exciting.

42:19:

We'll have to continue to be collecting data to look at other impacts. But you know, again, I think we're committed to science. We spread the science and skills of happiness.

42:27:

So we're collecting data to be true to ourselves to assess what we're doing. And then the other thing we know is that staff retention and recruitment and retention for educators and educational organizations is really struggling.

42:42:

So we're also looking at recruitment and are looking at retention data for this particular school setting of educators. And again, it shows that in year two there was more retention, but the data, the numbers are very low.

42:55:

So I don't want to make any assumptions from this. I will share with you that, as Katie mentioned at the very beginning of this webinar, we have heaps of data from other fields talking about how when an organization focuses on well-being, people feel more connected to their job.

43:13:

They feel more successful, obviously those things can contribute to retention. So I feel like it's time for the, Katie says, the wellbeing revolution to get us going, ensuring our educators and our students have access.

43:29:

All students have access to these skills of wellbeing. And then I'll introduce next up. Jamie, I don't think anybody's seen you yet, so pop on for a minute for the camera so people can see who you are. Hello, you're muted.

Jamie Evanko 43:43:

Happy to join the chat. Thank you for that warm welcome.

Patricia Wright 43:46:

Yes, and Jamie, as a classroom teacher, can you share, like, we'd love to hear, you know, stories are so powerful. Can you share a couple stories with us about skills of wellbeing?

Jamie Evanko 43:56:

I am so happy to do that and I feel really lucky that in my eight years of teaching experience, I have been able to use the science and skills of everything we've talked about so far today in my classroom. I have grown with those skills.

44:12:

My students have grown with those skills. And even towards the end as an administrative intern, I've been very lucky to use these skills in new teacher orientation and teacher training.

44:24:

And I've also been able to see what it means to include these in a professional setting that way. So I've been so lucky to be introduced and Patricia is exactly right. This also crosses over into my family as well.

44:40:

Pictures of my daughter are an absolute Jolt of Joy. And she practices Jolts of Joy because if anyone knows how quickly a toddler can navigate a phone, they love looking at pictures of themselves too.

44:53:

So in all areas of my life these skills have very much resonated, and I'm happy to talk about what I've seen today. So in the classroom, the first skill that Katie had mentioned for what went well, I have seen connections build with students day in and day out.

45:14:

Everybody who engages with this connects with it, but most importantly, I feel the students who may struggle at first to connect with this, end up building some of the deepest connections through what went well.

45:29:

And if I could just share a quick anecdote of a student who at first was very hesitant. I'm sure we can picture in the classroom some of our students being a little iffy at first to dive in.

45:41:

Until we began to notice that every day my one student started to share a little more about what went well about music, about a favorite artist, about a new song that dropped. Definitely an artist that I did not know of.

45:58:

So the more that I was able to lean in, the more connection we were able to build. And I had asked, would you like to run our classroom playlist? Would you like to build around that emotion?

46:11:

And a student who was hesitant at first, the very next day, I was pleasantly surprised to see them ready at my door. You know, we were talking high school students here, right on time, and as they started to come on time, they were there to make sure the playlist was ready.

46:27:

The music was ready. Other students started to join in as they shared what went well. They hadn't known that same artist either. So not only are these resources here and these skills so important to engage in, but the more we practice them, the deeper we can build in our connections, which is so great.

46:48:

I mean, as I said, I've used this for close to 10 years in my own classroom and the skill grows with new students, new experiences, new settings, and there are things that just allow us to connect and really work on our own wellbeing as teachers and for the students.

47:08:

Another huge time that I was able to use this as a classroom teacher, and I'm sure many of us can experience, no matter what relationship we have to the educational system is during IEP time. So Katie had mentioned the skill Jolts of Joy.

47:28:

What I was finding as a teacher is that it's a really tough time for students, for teachers. Transitions are happening all the time, maybe students are called down at a time that might be beneficial for everybody, but it's in the middle of just our teaching.

47:45:

So there's a lot that happens during this time. So I used this skill as just an active part of our culture to really work around this season of the school year.

47:59:

And the more we leaned into Jolts of Joy around this time period the more our classroom reaped the benefits. But again, I know Katie used the word Joy Multiplier. It reached farther than that.

48:15:

We talked about, CST was able to report back to us that the students coming from my classroom were feeling so much more positive, engaging in this time period because they were reaping these Positive Emotions inside of my classroom.

48:33:

And then it was rolling out even farther. So I was really lucky to see those and have those experiences through these ideas, these science and skills of happiness.

48:47:

As an administrative intern, I was able to really just see a culture created in an entire school to lean into, what did these skills look like when we were doing new teacher orientation, when we were training teachers.

49:05:

Giving the teachers the power to include this in their classroom and they themselves getting to lean into the science and skills of happiness. So truly I am thankful for these skills.

49:17:

I'm thankful for the time we are spending together today because these skills do impact the wellbeing for teachers, students, and so many more. So thank you.

Katie Curran 49:29:

Jamie. Thank you so much for sharing your experience. And I think you sort of walked into a school your very first year of teaching. I had the pleasure of meeting you then that had just embraced the idea that wellbeing is a teachable learnable skill.

49:47:

That they were tracking the positive education movement happening globally and happening around the country, and they were starting to embrace this. So it's been really fun over the last decade to watch you sort of navigate the classroom and then join our team here at Proof Positive.

50:03:

So when you are engaging with our materials, when you are looking for help or feedback, Jamie is actually the face you will see when you reach out to Proof Positive and the person you will talk to, she's behind the scenes doing quite a bit of the work in making these skills accessible.

50:20:

So really thankful to hear from you Jamie. And while Jamie is one of the sort of original joy multipliers, we are so thankful each and every one of you are here.

50:31:

Because by being here today, by leaning into learning about the science and skills of happiness, by practicing even if just for today what went well, Jolts of Joy showcase the good, you've already spread more happiness today than you might have if you had not shown up to this webinar or not watched this recording.

50:55:

So thank you for helping us advance the wellbeing revolution. It starts with each and every one of us creating a world where wellbeing is accessible to all, where wellbeing wins. So we are thrilled you're here. We hope you will join the alliance.

51:11:

Joining the alliance really just means giving us your name, giving us your email so that once a month we can share the latest, greatest in the science and skills of happiness with you. We really will not communicate much more than once a month with you, but you will be in this with us.

51:29:

You will be hearing when we launch new skills, hearing about webinars that are coming. And you'll, you know, sort of join this community of like-minded folks that are advancing wellbeing for all. So join us.

51:43:

We are putting a link to our Join Us Page in the chat. I mentioned the Skills Center. So we covered three skills today. Here's QR codes for three additional skills. When you get to the Skills Center, you will find videos, you will find Google Slides, you'll find teachers' guides and worksheets and posters and all sorts of stuff.

52:08:

We are forever indebted to our generous founders who are committed to ensuring that the skills of happiness are free now and into the future. So people ask us all the time, how long will I have access to this? Will it be free forever? Is this sort of a free me in model?

52:32:

And the answer is no. We are so grateful for our founders, their stories on our website. Their son had great impact when he accessed the science and skills of happiness, and they would really like to share it with anyone and everyone who would like to access the skills.

52:51:

So these skills are free, they're free of charge to you. If you have any trouble accessing them, please do reach out to us and we'll continue to build the skills as we go. You can also follow us on social media.

53:05:

Today's a particularly fun day to do that because it is the international Day of happiness. Lots of our partner organizations and alliance members have been posting sort of the fun they're having, answering the question, what kind of happy are you?

53:18:

So join us on socials, download playlists, watch videos, follow us on LinkedIn or wherever it is that you like to connect. But truly just a huge thank you from our team to each of you for leaning in on this day, the International Day of Happiness, to learn a little bit about how to spread the science and skills of happiness.

53:40:

We appreciate you being here. And Patricia, I believe we have a few minutes for questions.

Patricia Wright 53:44:

Yeah, we have a couple questions that have come in. And thanks Katie so much and Jamie, it's like the, you know, content expertise and the application is just really powerful.

53:55:

And I know to the educators, I hope the takeaways are really immediately implementable, and I'm not even sure if that's a word. So one of the questions was, and I appreciate this.

54:06:

I'm a new classroom teacher and where would you suggest starting, like sometimes like it's three skills, which one should I do first? From your experience, Katie, and you know, what would be the place to start?

Katie Curran 54:20:

Really great question. So I think the best place to start is making sure that you and your students know that happiness is a skill you will be learning. That happiness is something that can be taught and learned.

54:38:

So I actually like to start with just the introduction of like, we are focusing on happiness intentionally. And then from there it's really up to you which of these skills sort of feels most easily accessible.

54:55:

But I will say What Went Well, Jolts of Joy, are the top two where people say, yeah, regardless of the sort of level of my class, regardless of where I am in my teaching career, those feel accessible.

55:11:

Just starting to ask students what went well or creating a bulletin board where the class creates instant Jolts of Joy and it becomes a classroom habit to once a day a student gets to run over and pull a Jolt of Joy, and the whole class does it.

55:28:

So what went well, Jolts of Joy is really easy, but I would start by just naming happiness as a skill, like reading, writing, math or gym class. You are also going to be learning happiness in this classroom.

Patricia Wright 55:43:

All right, and we're coming in on the last minute, so I'm going to have to pass it back to Kathleen. So I'm just going to answer this last question as we come back in here. As someone said, can I share this information with parents and care providers? 100%, yes.

55:56:

Just like Jamie said, she uses it with her own toddler. We actually have built-in resources and materials for families, and we think that again, the marriage between special education, education and families is a really important one to get best outcomes.

56:13:

So again, because the materials are available for free, you're welcome to share everything with families and it's really appropriate for families to do this. So I am going to pass it back to Kathleen and say thank you so much again to OAR for this invitation and all of you for coming and joining us today.

Kathleen 56:34:

Wonderful. Thank you so much to all our presenters today. And thank you everyone for joining us. If you found today's event helpful, we do encourage you to register at OAR's Next Webinar event Making Math Meaningful for Autistic Students on April 17th.

56:50:

It's from 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM Eastern Time. Now, once you close out of today's event, you will receive an exit survey and we would appreciate it if you would complete that and provide your feedback.

57:02:

Everyone will also receive a follow-up email today with their certificate of attendance. On behalf of the Organization for Autism Research, thank you for joining us and have a fantastic rest of your day.

