



## ***TEACHABLE SKILLS THAT LEAD TO SUSTAINED HAPPINESS AS DEFINED BY THE GREATER GOOD SCIENCE CENTER***

LG Electronics has partnered with Inner Explorer to create an initiative called Life's Good: Experience Happiness. After a year of research, LG Electronics found that the underlying causes of homelessness and hunger were often rooted in mental health problems. Further research indicated that there are teachable skills that lead to happiness which result in overall well-being.

These skills will certainly be helpful for participants in the Gear-Up Program who have faced adversity and are headed to college. Mindfulness is the skill that when taught leads to the other five!

### ***1. Mindfulness***

Mindfulness is being aware of your thoughts, feelings, and surrounding environment in the present moment, without judging your thoughts or feelings as admirable, shameful, or anything in between – while maintaining a kind, supportive stance towards oneself and others. Practicing mindfulness helps us develop focus and emotional balance and builds resilience, i.e. our capacity to recover, and derive meaning, from difficult experiences. There is evidence that when mindfulness is taught in the classroom, behavioral problems are reduced, while attentiveness, empathy, and learning go up.

### ***2. Human Connection***

Illustrated through almost 50 years of research, human connection - relationships with significant others, friendships, and social engagement with peers – is the most reliable, enduring predictor of happiness in life. Those with close bonds are happier, less lonely, and have higher self-esteem. Strong relationships are essential to happiness, as they are critical to well-being.

### ***3. Gratitude***

The simple act of appreciating and thanking others for the goodness they contribute to our lives helps foster happiness. Stemming from the significance of quality relationships and the sense of well-being that human connection creates, thankfulness fuels optimism, and reinforces our basic trust that others are there for us. When gratitude is expressed toward someone, it is often returned, creating a reciprocally benevolent loop.

Finally, gratitude involves being thankful and aware of our own privilege, and identifying the sources of goodness outside of ourselves.

#### ***4. Positive Outlook***

Positivity is one's ability to imagine a fruitful outcome and maintain a readiness to pursue and experience the positive opportunity in any circumstance. Positive emotions open our awareness and increase the expanse of our peripheral vision, helping us see more possibilities. When experiencing positive emotions, people are more creative, more resilient to adversity, more likely to perform better academically, and more socially connected. Individuals can foster a more positive outlook by being open, appreciative, curious, kind, optimistic and sincere. From these strategies spring positive emotions.

#### ***5. Purpose***

Understanding our ability to make a difference in the world, at work, school, or for a team or community, leads to a fuller, finer sense of purpose and increases our sense of happiness. Having a sense of purpose involves a combination of living according to one's values and goals, and striving to make a positive difference that transcends self-interest. William Damon, the director of the Stanford Center on Adolescence, defines purpose as "a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at the same time meaningful to the self and consequential for the world beyond the self." Finding one's purpose requires dedicated commitment, personal meaningfulness, goal directedness, and a vision larger than one's self. Teachers can inspire a sense of purpose in students by prioritizing internal motivation over external achievement, fostering teamwork and collaboration, helping students see teachers as mentors and coaches, taking students out into the world, encouraging learning from failure, valuing students' inner lives, and starting with the "why" – that is - providing context for school work.

#### ***6. Generosity***

Research in neuroscience has offered evidence that generosity, helping and being kind to others, is intrinsically rewarding. According to a study overseen by Harvard University, those who donated time or money were 42% more likely to be happy when compared to those who didn't give anything. Psychologists have identified this kindness-to-happiness-buzz as a "helpers high." The feeling after expressing kindness toward someone produces a rush of endorphins, that similar to, but not dangerous like a drug high. As a result of this "warm glow", happiness and cheerfulness are increased in those who participate in acts of kindness. Being kind creates an cycle that promotes widespread happiness and altruism.