Fun activities

Very quickly list the activities that you have done in the past week that you really enjoyed doing. Note how many times you did each activity.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

You will use this list later for another activity.
FYI – The effects of laughing

THE PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF LAUGHING

What happens when you laugh?

Fifteen facial muscles contract and there is electrical stimulation of the zygomatic major (cheek) muscle in particular. The epiglottis half-closing interrupts respiration so that intake of air becomes irregular and gasping. These behaviours are usually accompanied by noises that can range from sedate giggles to boisterous guffaws.

Source: http://people.howstuffworks.com/laughter.htm

Humour and Physical Health!

What the research shows:

• Muscles relax more quickly after watching funny cartoons than after looking at beautiful scenery.
• Laughter reduces some of the hormones associated with the stress response.
• Watching 30 – 60 minutes of comedy results in beneficial changes to the immune system that are still present 12 hours later.
• Humour has been found to reduce pain in some patients.

One minute of laughter is equal to 10 minutes on the rowing machine.

Laughing is contagious!

Humans have a detector in the brain that is specifically devoted to laughter. It responds to laughter by triggering neural circuits that generate more laughter.

Source: McGhee, 1999

Words that describe laughter!

cackle, chortle, chuckle, crack up, hee-haw, hoot, giggle, guffaw, snigger, snort, titter
HUMOUR AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

"Laughter is like an instant vacation" – Milton Berle, Comedian

How does humour assist emotional health:

• Seeing a smile and returning it changes our brain chemistry and gives us a natural high. It gives us more pleasure than eating chocolate, shopping, being given money, or drinking coffee.

• Humour helps people cope more effectively with life stressors.

• Laughing promotes feelings of happiness and joy and under these conditions it is much easier to think creatively around a problem.

• Humour is an easy way to get in touch with your feelings and control them in difficult situations.

• Laughter brings people together and improves interpersonal relationships.

• Regular laughter puts people in a positive frame of mind and gradually makes them positive thinkers.

• Humour makes it easier to challenge negative thoughts.

• Positive thinking and optimism are linked with better health outcomes.

Your sense of humour is one of the most powerful tools you have to make certain that your daily mood and emotional state support good health.

(McGhee, 1999)
OUT OF CLASS ACTIVITY - Experiment 1 - Planning for pleasant events

The aim of this experiment is to see if you can improve your mood by increasing the number of pleasant or fun activities that you do each day.

Using the list created at the start of the lesson as your baseline, you should aim to increase the overall number of pleasant events you undertake in your week. You should **include at least one activity each day**. You don’t have to stick to the list only – add any new activities you think of.

To check the change in your mood you should do a mood rating twice a day. The first rating should be done early in the morning (e.g. in the bus or car on the way to school, or when having breakfast) and then in the evening (e.g. immediately after dinner or before going to bed). The ratings should be done at the same time each day. The rating scale is from **1 – 10** and is explained below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very low/bad mood</th>
<th>Neutral mood</th>
<th>Very happy/positive mood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use the sheet below to record your activities, the length of time spent on fun activities (roughly), and your mood ratings for the week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Morning Mood Rating</th>
<th>Evening Mood Rating</th>
<th>Fun Activities Undertaken</th>
<th>Time spent doing them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generally, if you can plan some enjoyable activities every day your mood will stay more positive. If you find that your mood stays very low for the whole time you might want to talk to someone you trust about it.
Experiment 2 – Pay it Forward

Recent research, carried out by computer company Hewlett Packard, indicated that a simple human interaction is worth far more than material pleasures. The study showed that the emotions triggered when someone important in our lives smiles at us and we smile back changes our brain chemistry. It creates a short-term high that is better than eating chocolate, shopping, or receiving money.

As part of the study, researchers smiled at strangers on the street and found that 80% or 4 out of 5 Scottish people returned the smile.


Do you think Australians are more likely to return a smile than the Scottish? To find out conduct your own experiment.

During the next week, choose a day or a set time to smile at the people that you pass as part of your daily routine – like the people at school or in your neighbourhood.

NOTE: Please only do this in a safe environment, when you are close to other people you know and trust.

Keep a record of how many people you smile at and how many smile back at you. Then calculate the percentage to work out how Australians compare with the Scottish.
Do you have a good sense of humour?

If you have access to a computer and the internet, you might like to go to the following website

http://www.members.shaw.ca/canadahumour/humoureval.html

and complete the short test that measures your sense of humour.

Here are some other interesting humour-related websites you might like to take a look at.

http://people.howstuffworks.com/laughter.htm

www.thehappinessinstitute.com