

Happiness Age 1 Summary

Why Happiness?

Your child's connections with you and others and their ability to engage in meaningful learning and play are essential to developing lifelong happiness. As a parent or someone in a parenting role, you play an essential role in your child's success. There are intentional ways to grow a healthy parent-child relationship, and developing feelings of happiness is a great way to do it.

STEP

1



Getting to Know and Understand Your Child's Input

- Consider how your child reacts when they are happy or excited. How do they show you? Children at this age clap their hands, imitate others, smile, squeal, and laugh when they are happy or excited.
- Consider how your child reacts when they are scared. How do they show you? Children at this age are more aware of their surroundings, which can make them afraid of new things or sounds. They may cry, withdraw, or hide.
- Consider how your child reacts when upset, angry, or frustrated.
 - How do they show you? Children this age may cry, yell, hit, bite, or throw things. They can still be soothed by cuddling and rocking and learn to self-soothe when upset.
 - If a child cries, offer to hold them or provide comfort items like a favorite teddy bear or a blanket. Do not attempt to talk anything through when a child is distraught. Focus on calming down first.
 - If a child hits or bites in anger or frustration, stop and say, *"Ouch. That hurts my arm, and it makes me feel sad,"* or *"I see you are frustrated."*
- Each time your child expresses any big feeling, be sure to name it. *"You have a smile on your face. You seem happy."* This builds their feelings vocabulary and adds to their self-awareness and ability to manage their feelings. This includes describing and naming the joy they may feel when they have fun with you and the pride they feel when they can do something for the first time. Pointing out how they can experience happiness will help them notice it and know what experiences bring them joy.

- When reading books, look at the images of people and point out what you notice about the character’s feelings. *“I think that character feels happy because he likes playing with friends. Does playing with your friends make you feel happy, too?”*

STEP
2



TEACH

Teach New Skills

- Read and “pretend play” together.
 - During reading time, select a book with faces to help your child learn to identify different feelings. Point out how you can tell each face's feelings and practice recreating those cues with your child.
 - After reading a story together, act out the story and use feeling words and expressions to match how the characters are feeling throughout the story. This expands their feelings vocabulary and teaches them how to recognize a wide range of perspectives and emotions they might not encounter in daily interactions with others.
 - Replay moments that made your child feel joy during pretend play. *“Do you remember how much fun it was to play hide-and-seek yesterday? Do you want to play again?”*
- Make your thinking and feelings explicit. Talk about what you notice, how you feel, why you feel it, and what signs you are giving. *“We worked hard to build that block tower. It was fun! It made me smile like this.”*
- Talk aloud about how you respond to your big feelings: *“Playing together with toys makes me feel so happy. I want to give you a big hug.”*

Trap: Don’t expect a long attention span for any one activity. Follow your infant’s lead. They likely will signal with a short cry or simply change their attention when they need to shift their focus.

STEP
3



PRACTICE

Practice to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Provide opportunities for your child to do more challenging things than before. The goal is to create experiences beyond what they are comfortable with so they can experience working hard and mastering a new skill. This may be a challenging social situation, like waving hello to a neighbor who they felt too shy to wave to in the past.
- Create regular routines that build your child’s relationships with others. Even a daily walk to get the mail with a parent can become a cherished, comforting, connecting, and joyful routine.

- Use your child’s dolls or stuffed animals to act out moments of happiness so that they become part of your child’s stories and memories. This is an excellent way to relive special moments and remind your child about family members' and friends' roles in their happiness.

STEP
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SUPPORT

Support Your Child’s Development and Success

- Recognize effort using “I notice...” statements like: *“I noticed that you could put your clothes into the basket as we practiced. We were both smiling. I love seeing that.”*
- On days with extra challenges, when you can see your child is not feeling particularly happy, let them know that it is ok not to feel happy sometimes and that they are likely to feel happy again soon. In a gentle, non-public way, you can whisper in your child’s ear, *“We thought this would be fun, but it is ok if you don’t like it.”*
- Actively reflect on how your child feels when doing something that brings them joy. You can offer reflections like: *“You smiled a lot while we played with the bucket of water in the backyard. It seemed like you felt happy.”*

STEP
5


RECOGNIZE

Recognize Efforts

- Recognize and call out when things are going well. It may seem obvious, but it’s easy not to notice when everything moves smoothly. Noticing and naming the behavior provides the necessary reinforcement that you see and value your child's choice.
- Recognize small steps along the way. Don’t wait for significant accomplishments—like the whole bedtime routine going smoothly—to recognize effort. Remember that your recognition can work as a tool to promote more positive behaviors. Find small ways your child is making an effort and let them know you see them.
- Build celebrations into your routine. For example, after completing your bedtime routine, snuggle and read before bed.

Tip: This year is filled with amazing changes -- and not just for your child. Don’t forget to recognize and celebrate your own development and milestones as a parent.

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