



THREE GOOD THINGS FOR STUDENTS

"One of the things I learned the hard way was that it doesn't pay to get discouraged. Keeping busy and making optimism a way of life can restore your faith in yourself."

— Lucille Ball

OVERVIEW

Students record three good things that happened to them each day for a week and an explanation of how they achieved or contributed to the good things.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Any time during the school year, but especially when students may be experiencing challenges in life or in school

TIME REQUIRED

- 10-15 minutes daily for at least one week

LEVEL

- Pre-K & Lower Elementary
- Upper Elementary
- Middle School
- High School

MATERIALS

- Writing materials, including a small notebook or journal for each student

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Record three good things that happened to them
- Explain how they achieved or contributed to these things

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-awareness

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Take a moment to write down three good things that happened to you in the past week and explain how you achieved or contributed to these things. How did this exercise make you feel? If you have the time, continue the practice for at least a week.

INSTRUCTIONS

SUBHEADING 1

- Explain to students that they will be keeping a journal for a week in which they will record three good things that happened to them each day and an explanation of how they achieved or contributed to the good things.
- Try to encourage students to really think deeply about these positive things.
- First, ask students to think about “three good things that have happened to you today.”
 - If they are having difficulty focusing their attention on positive experiences, you can offer the following prompts: (You can also suggest a quick brainstorming session in pairs or groups of three.)
 - *Think about when you worked really hard in class today.*
 - *Think about when you helped a friend today.*
 - *Think about when you did something nice for someone or someone did something nice for you.*
 - *Think about when you tried your best at something today.*
 - *Think about something you did that made you feel really good about yourself.*
 - *Think about a difficult situation that worked out well in the end.*
- Next, ask students to write down what they did in each instance that contributed to the “good thing.” If necessary, you can prompt them as follows:
 - *How did you do that?*
 - *What did you do exactly?*
 - *How did you make that happen?*
 - *What did you do to make that happen?*
- Students can either list all three good things first and then complete the explanation section, or complete one good thing followed by its explanation and repeat twice.

- If there is time, after students have written their three good things and their explanations in their journals, they can talk about one of the good things that happened to them with a peer. This will hopefully encourage them to focus on why the good thing happened and reinforce positive thinking.

CLOSURE

- After a week, ask students to reflect on the practice of writing three good things each day. What did the experience feel like? Did it change their perception of school or other areas of life? Would they do it again? What advice might they give to someone who is thinking of writing down three good things?

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

Do you notice if students are expressing more positive emotions or optimism after doing this practice?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

In a study of around 600 students ages 8 to 11, the group who completed [Three Good Things](#) for a week reported being happier afterward and three months later, compared to the group who just journaled about their daily experiences. There was also some evidence that the exercise could help with symptoms of depression, particularly for students who were less happy to begin with.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Just like adults, children can get caught up in the things that go wrong in their lives—like getting bad grades, feeling left out, or experiencing conflict with parents—and forget to appreciate all the positive things. Three Good Things is designed to highlight the positive moments, experiences, and people that children may sometimes take for granted.

After 30 minutes of practice for a week, this exercise has been shown to boost students' happy feelings, a benefit that might spill over into other aspects of their lives. Students who experience [greater positive emotions](#) may put in more effort to overcome obstacles, [engage](#) in classroom activities more, and be [less stressed at school](#). In addition, [positive mental health in childhood](#) is linked to educational achievement and professional success later in life.