



Greater Good in Education
SCIENCE-BASED PRACTICES FOR KINDER, HAPPIER SCHOOLS

TAKE-HOME SKILL: PLEASANT EVENTS CALENDAR FOR KIDS AND TEENS

"Fun is good."

— *Dr. Seuss*

OVERVIEW

Children and teens learn to care for themselves by planning enjoyable activities to combat stress and anxiety.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- When your child or teen is feeling overwhelmed or stressed
- When your child or teen is operating on "autopilot" and needs to take a step back to take care of themselves

TIME REQUIRED

- ≤ 15 minutes

LEVEL

- Upper Elementary
- Middle School
- High School
- College

MATERIALS

- A calendar

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Understand the value of self-compassion in maintaining their mental health
- Understand that taking time to do things they enjoy is one way to practice self-compassion
- Understand how to prioritize and deliberately plan weekly activities

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- Making Practices Culturally Responsive
- Adapting Practices for Students with Special Needs
- Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-awareness
- Self-management

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- Think about all the things you enjoy doing that help to relieve your stress.
- How often do you engage in those activities? How do you feel after doing them?
- Try participating in the Pleasant Events Calendar activity before sharing it with your child or teen, or simply join them!

INSTRUCTIONS

OVERVIEW

Compassion is about noticing suffering, including our own, and being moved to alleviate it. Amid their busy schedules, children and teens may not always notice when they are suffering--stressed, overwhelmed, or sad--or they may ignore their own suffering as they march forward to meet the demands of their lives.

One way to help children and teens develop self-compassion is by encouraging them to make time to explore their interests and engage in activities they enjoy through the use of a Pleasant Events Calendar. You can think of it as a form of self-care for kids. Here's how to do it:

ACTIVITY

1. **Reflect:** Encourage your child or teen to write down a list of activities they enjoy doing. These can include hobbies, things they do by themselves, or things they do with friends and/or family.

2. **Schedule:** Help your child or teen identify time slots on the calendar when they can do one or two of the activities.
3. **Track:** Place the calendar in a visible location and help your children track the activities by adding a sticker or checkmark when they are completed.

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- How did you and your child or teen feel before, during, and after the activities you scheduled? What adjustments will you make for the coming week?
- Consider why it is important to take time to do the things you all enjoy. How can you incorporate these activities into your schedules on a regular basis?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

Middle schoolers participated in an eight-session mindfulness course based on a stress reduction workbook for teens; as part of the course, they created a Pleasant Events Calendar. Middle schoolers had greater self-compassion and mindfulness and felt less stress and depression after they completed the course compared to before.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Children and teens experience stress that can feel overwhelming at times. With so many responsibilities on their plates, they may struggle to take care of themselves. Self-compassion, or treating ourselves kindly, provides an opportunity for us to pause, take stock of what we need, and respond with care. And this activity encourages children and teens to proactively integrate more pleasant and enjoyable activities into their weekly schedules.

Ultimately, being self-compassionate may allow children and teens to be more open to receiving and giving care to others. The practice of taking care of and being kind to themselves can help them reduce stress and increase feelings of curiosity and gratitude. And people who grow up into self-compassionate adults have stronger relationships with their partners and may be more resilient when confronting stressors like a serious illness.

SOURCE

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