Warm-up

Stretch
(de-stress; improve mood)

Deep breathing
(vagus activation)

Visualize a positive experience
(rewiring the brain)

Share with a partner
(creating positive connections)
Science of a Meaningful Life for Education

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Learning Objectives

In this workshop, you will:

• Explore the latest research showing how leading a meaningful life is good for both you and your students;

• Learn how the science on awe, hope, mindfulness, empathy, compassion, self-compassion, and gratitude can be used to enhance the lives of both teachers and students;

• Practice research-based tools for fostering awe, hope, mindfulness, empathy, compassion, self-compassion, and gratitude in yourself and your students.
The origins of human goodness are rooted in our emotions, and these social instincts may be stronger than those of any other instinct or motive.

– Dacher Keltner
Kindness starts young...
Encouraging kindness is simple...

(Over & Carpenter, 2009)
A New View of Human Development

Homo Economicus

VS.

Homo Benevolentis
So what happens? This...
... or this?
Students today...
(American College Health Association, 2013)

- Depression 30%
- Anxiety 51%
- Self-injure 7%
- Hopeless 45%
- Eating disorders 25%
- Substance abuse 42%
Social-emotional learning

&

Contemplative practice, e.g., mindfulness
Benefits of social-emotional learning (CASEL)

Promotes:
- Academic success
- Health & well-being
- Communication skills & teamwork
- Positive attitudes about self, school, peers, teachers

Prevents:
- Alcohol & drug abuse
- Violence
- Truancy
- Bullying
**Benefits of mindfulness in education**

(Flook et al., 2013; Jennings et al., 2013; Kemeny et al., 2012; Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010)

**For students:**
- Increases ability to pay attention, self-control, self-care, optimism, social-emotional skills
- Decreases anxiety, stress, & fatigue

**For teachers:**
- Increases well-being, efficacy, positive emotions, self-compassion, & teaching skills
- Decreases burnout, stress, depression, negative emotions, & anxiety
New View of Human Development & Learning

50% social-emotional

50% cognitive
Negative vs. Positive Emotions

or
Not just for students....

Can you help me, Mrs. Martin? This wasn't covered in any of my education courses.
Teacher Social and Emotional Competence

- Warm & supportive teacher-student relationships
- Positive classroom climate
- Better classroom management
- More open to innovation & change
- Stronger relationships with colleagues
- Effective implementation of SEL programs (Developmental Studies Center; Jennings & Greenberg, 2008)
Discuss with a partner:

How does this new view of human development impact your thoughts about education? About your role as a teacher?
A New View of Human Development

The origins of human goodness are rooted in our emotions, and these social instincts may be stronger than those of any other instinct or motive.

– Dacher Keltner
Happiness

“the experience of joy, contentment, or positive well-being, combined with a sense that one’s life is good, meaningful, and worthwhile”

(Lyubomirsky, The How of Happiness, 2007)
A few caveats...

- The pursuit of happiness... makes us less happy (Gruber, Mauss, & Tamir, 2011)
- Positive emotions in extremes can be problematic (e.g., proneness to mania, risky behavior)
- Negative emotions are part of the mix
Happiness (Lyubomirsky, 2007)

- Genes: 50%
- Circumstances: 10%
- Life: 10%
- Daily Activities: 40%
Cultivating Happiness...

(Peterson, 2006)

1. Hedonic treadmill

2. Flow

3. Meaningful life
What IS “a meaningful life”?
The Science of a Meaningful Life

- Hope
- Mindfulness
- Empathy
- Gratitude
- Compassion
- Altruism
- Play
- Awe
Something that is meaningful to you that also serves the greater good.

got purpose?
Where the students are...

• Disengaged
• Dreamers
• Dabblers
• Purposeful

"They will not stop me. I will get my education if it is in home, school, or any place."
- MALALA YOUSAFZAI
Awe!
The Experience of Awe

(Shiota, Keltner, & Mossman, 2007)

1. Sense of vastness

2. New perspective on the world and our place in it
Mental and Physical Effects of Awe...
(Shiota, Keltner, & Mossman, 2007)

- We get goose bumps and an expansive, warm swelling in the chest
- Lessens the focus on self and highlights our common humanity
- Connects us to something larger than ourselves
- Increases our altruism, our sense of time, and well-being (Rudd, Vohs, & Aaker, 2012)
What Generates Awe?

(Shiota, Keltner, & Mossman, 2007)

• Nature
• Art
• People
• Grand Theories
History of the Earth in a single day
(Courtesy: NASA / Goddard Space Flight Center & Burt)

12:00 to 4:00am: No life. A planet with poisonous gases in the air, no soil and a hot sea.

4:00am to 8:00pm: Single celled organisms, some begin to produce oxygen.

Just before 8:30pm: First marine plants

8:50pm: Jellyfish and simple multicellular organisms

Just after 9:00pm: Great diversification of multicellular life, Trilobites, Vertebrates

10:00pm: First plant life and then animals appear on dry land

11:00pm to 11:45pm: Reign of the Reptiles – Dinosaurs Rule!

1 minute and 17 seconds to midnight: First humans appear.
Discuss:

How might you incorporate awe into your classroom?
Characteristics of Kid High in Hope

- Can set *clear and attainable* goals.
- Able to develop *multiple* strategies to reach those goals.
- Stay *motivated* to use the strategies to attain goals, even when the going gets tough. (Lopez, Rose, Robinson, Marques, & Pais-Ribeiro, 2009)
Students High in Hope:

- Greater academic success
- Stronger friendships
- More creative & better at problem-solving
- Lower levels of depression & anxiety
- Don’t take failure personally—they use it to improve performance.
- More optimistic (Lopez, Rose, Robinson, Marques, & Pais-Ribeiro, 2009)
Developing Hope
(Lopez, Rose, Robinson, Marques, & Pais-Ribeiro, 2009)

1. What’s most important to you? Why? Looking back on your life, what do you want to be remembered for? Why?

2. List the broad categories of what’s most important to you (e.g., family, friends, school, sports, environment, future career).
3. Pick one category you could improve. Create 2-3 goals that are specific, measurable and take a “solutions-oriented” approach.

4. Rank those goals in order of importance.

5. Breakdown the top ranked goal into steps.

6. In case you encounter obstacles to any of these steps, visualize at least 1 different pathway to reach that goal.

Developing Hope
(Lopez, Rose, Robinson, Marques, & Pais-Ribeiro, 2009)
Discuss with a partner:

What might be challenging about this goal-setting process?
Two More Things About Hope...


8. Enjoy the process!
Mindfulness

“The awareness that arises out of intentionally paying attention in an open, kind, and discerning way” (Shapiro & Carlson, 2006)
Mindfulness and Brain Plasticity
(Davidson & Begley, 2012)
Resilience (Davidson & Begley, 2012)

• The role of the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala
Mindfulness Practice

• Sitting

• Walking

• Loving-kindness
Empathy

“the ability to sense other people’s emotions, coupled with the ability to imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling.”
Why is empathy important?

- Building block of morality
- Relationships
- More likely to help
- Reduces prejudice & racism
- Good for marriage
- Lessens bullying
How to develop empathy in children...

- Actively imagine how another is feeling
- *Play games*
- Be open about emotions
- *Meditation*
- Don’t jump to conclusions
- Teach emotional literacy
Flirtatiousness
Interest
Happiness
Politeness
Happiness

Eyelids: Muscles tighten around eyes, pouching of lower eyelid

Lips: Corners pulled up
Pride
Contempt
Excitement
Anger
Pride

**Head:** Tilts backward

**Lips:** Corners go up in slight smile

**Jaw:** Thrusts out
Satisfaction
Flirtatiousness
Love
Compassion
Love

Head: Tilts to the side

Eyes: Lower eyelid tightened

Lips: Corners pulled up
Compassion

“the feeling that arises when you are confronted with another’s suffering and feel motivated to relieve that suffering.”
Benefits of Compassion

- Health
- Happiness
- Better relationships
- More compassionate society
Empathy & Compassion Inhibitors

1. Lack of resources
2. Don’t feel safe
3. Lack of time
4. Not deserving of help
5. Lack of identification with other Person
6. Power imbalance
7. Emotion overload – the myth of “compassion fatigue”
How to develop compassion

- Look for commonalities
- *Calm the inner warrior*
- Encourage cooperation, not competition
- *See people as individuals (not abstractions)*
- Don’t play the blame game
- *Know you’re capable of making a difference*
- Model compassion for your kids
- *Don’t be a sponge*
Self-Compassion

The ability to become aware of, accept, and be with our own stress, pain, and suffering, and respond with warmth and kindness.
Self-esteem:
Global evaluation of self-worth
Self-esteem:
I’m special and above average

VICTORIA’S SECRET
Lowering a woman’s self-esteem since 1977
This bad grade is lowering my self-esteem!

Then you should work harder so you don't get bad grades.

Your denial of my victimhood is lowering my self-esteem!
Our true value lies in the core experience of being a conscious being who feels and perceives. (Neff, 2011)
3 Components of Self-Compassion
(Neff, 2011)

• **Self-Kindness** vs. Self-Judgment

• **Common Humanity** vs. Isolation

• **Mindfulness** vs. Over-identification
3 Practices of Self-Compassion
(Neff, 2011)

• Talk to yourself as you would a best friend

• Self-squeeze

• Breathe-in, breathe-out compassion
More Practices for Self-Compassion

**Flexing Rigid Thoughts**

What might you say to yourself if you:

- Have a bad class?
- Miss a deadline?
- Forget something?
- Make a mistake?
- Can’t do something?
- Look in the mirror?
- Get on the scale?
More Practices for Self-Compassion

**Rigid thoughts** contain words that overgeneralize, such as:
- Always
- Never
- Can’t
- No one

They can also can involve certain kinds of self-statements:
- I’m hopeless
- I’m stupid
- I’m mean

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<th>Rigid Thought...</th>
<th>...Rephrased as a Flexible Thought</th>
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**Flexible thoughts:**
- Sometimes
- Maybe
- Probably
- Most likely
- Though
- It’s possible that
Gratitude  (Emmons, 2007)

“... an affirmation of goodness -- that there are good things in the world, gifts and benefits we’ve received.”
Benefits of Gratitude

Emotional
- More Good Feeling
- More Resilient
- More Relaxed
- Less Envious
- Happier Memories

Personality
- Less Materialistic
- Less Self-Centered
- More Optimistic
- Increased Self-Esteem
- More Spiritual

Social
- More Social
- Kinder
- Healthier Marriage
- More Friendships
- Deeper Relationships

Health
- Improved Sleep
- Less Sick
- Longevity
- Increased Energy
- More Exercise

Career
- Better Management
- Improved Networking
- Goal Achievement
- Improved Decision Making
- Increased Productivity

Happiness

(Source: http://happierhuman.com/benefits-of-gratitude/)
Why Gratitude is Good...

1) Strengthens social ties.

2) Increases self-worth.

3) Middle school students who practice gratitude (Froh, 2008):
   • Higher levels of optimism
   • Increased life satisfaction
   • Decreased negative feelings
   • Greater satisfaction with school
Gratitude Activities

Gratitude journals

Gratitude letters
Stream of Gratitude...
Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does.

-William James
You are a part of the Greater Good...

**Participate!**


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- ✓ Become a member to support our work and enjoy benefits! Educator discount: enter code GGSCEducator

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