

Happiness Box

When you feel sad or frustrated, it is often doing something that makes you happy that takes away that sadness and frustration. For some children it can be cognitively challenging; they may not actually recognise the emotion they are experiencing or that they know they are upset, that things are not right.

We often talk about our inner strength. When times are difficult for us, we pull on that inner strength. That is an abstract concept that the young child, or the child with special educational needs, may find difficult to comprehend.

The Happiness Box is a visible and tangible way of creating, before the child's eyes, what inner strength may actually look like; it enables them to practice and rehearse strategies that help them cope with their emotions, resolve inner conflict, and bring them to a calm emotional state. In the box, they can see and physically touch the items, which helps bring them in a calm self soothe state of mind. Initially it will be with the support of an adult, who prompts them to use something in the happiness box.

What might be in a Happiness Box? The joy of a Happiness Box is that it can be totally personalised to the child; they put in the box things that make them happy. It might be a piece of music; it might be soft toy, a book, some drawing materials, fidget toys or a blanket that brings comfort.

A Happiness Box can be as large or small, as round or square, as you want it to be.

Step 1	Shoeboxes are good because they have a lid. The lid makes it special because you cannot see what is inside, until the need to open it. It is also private, unless you want to share. The objects inside instantly remind you of 'happy' times, which help calm
Step 2	Ownership of the box is pivotal. The undecorated box is fine, but decorating it is a positive start of the relationship with the box. Decoration: painted/covered with paper / drawings / stickers etc.
Step 3	Let the choice of objects be theirs. What makes you happy does not mean it will make them happy. Objects can range from: toy/material/ /scarf/putty/ family photos - pet/favourite person/home /themselves/holiday/mirror/Hairbrush/sensory object/mindfulness activities - colouring/postcards to colour & send/bubbles/card game/reminder notes - who or where to go to when feeling wobbly /book/notes on how well they are doing
Step 4	The box is ready to use. Introduce the box when you think it is a positive time to be received. Teach when to use the box, talk about times when feeling wobbly or wanting to screech/scream/run/cry! Ensure the box is always accessible
Step 5	'Happiness' is a lovely term for a child/young person to understand, however, there is a deeper message you want them to learn. It is a box, which helps calm, helps to self-regulate and build their emotional resilience.

The Happiness Box will hopefully be soothing to the child and enable them to self-regulate their emotional state. Think about this in terms of yourself. When you are sad or upset you may play your favourite piece of music, go for a run, complete a jigsaw, meditate, do some mindful colouring, cook, walk the dog.... The list is endless, but you know the personal intervention that will restore your state of well-being. It enables you to get through each day. It replenishes your inner strength. It enables you to get through life. Quite simply ask yourself, "What is in your Happiness Box?" Your box may be within you inside. For the child, the starting point may be in a box, which enables learning about their emotions and how to deal with them. One day it may also be a place in their mind.