

Workshop Session (90 minutes)

ELT and the “Science of Happiness”

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Positive, motivated students – engaged with what they are studying and with each other – learn more and approach tasks with more enthusiasm. How do we foster that positive attitude in the language classroom?

The new field of “positive psychology” offers direction. Psychology has traditionally focused on *mental illness*. Positive psychology focuses on *mental health*: What do happy, mentally healthy people do? TIME magazine dubbed this “the Science of Happiness.”

How can we connect ideas from positive psychology to our classrooms? In this session, we’ll work/play/experiment with tasks that do just that.

Positive psychology has identified eight behaviors of happy, mentally healthy people. They are (a) remembering good things in one’s life, (b) doing kind things, (c) taking time for friends and family, (d) forgiving, (e) taking care of one’s health, (f) expressing gratitude, (g) noticing good things as they happen (mindfulness), and (h) learning to deal with problems.

All of these items connect to language skills we teach our students: “express gratitude” and “remember good things” require past tenses, “notice things” requires the present, “dealing with problems” often brings up modals for advice, “friends”, family” and “health” are common classroom topics, “forgiveness” requires functional language.

This session will connect to practical classroom activities. Ranging from “happiness journals” to “gratitude letters” to “compliments and saying ‘thank you,’” these tasks allow learners to learn and practice English while engaging in the same behaviors positive psychology recommends.

The presenter has touched on Positive Psychology/ELT at KOTESOL before, but this workshop format will give us more time to delve deeper.