

BEHIND HAPPY FACES

Alpha Phi - Key



LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

These outcomes show what knowledge and skills participants should gain from the lesson. It is crucial you review the goals of the lesson with the members so they know what they will learn.



HANDOUT:

It is time to distribute a handout/materials to participants. These can be found at the end of each lesson if it includes a handout. Make copies in advance!



WRITE ON FLIP CHART:

The main points are included in PowerPoint presentations. In the event you do not have access to a computer/projector, write examples and instructions on flip chart paper in the front of the room.



GROUP DISCUSSION:

It is time to prompt participants with questions or dialogue for group discussion.



INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY:

It is time for an activity, like scenarios or a game. These activities help participants feel more connected to the information.



INSTRUCTIONS:

Read information or directions aloud to the groups.



WATCH THE VIDEO:

Each lesson includes videos to help introduce the topic and engage viewers to take part in the lessons. It is important to make sure you test them in advance to make sure the video and audio work on your technology.

Lesson 7: Neuroscience of Happiness

This lesson gives members four actions they can take to improve their levels of happiness. Neuroscientists have learned that there are daily habits that members can do to deactivate parts of their brains that resonate with chronic stress or fear and activate parts of their brains that improve their mood and focus. These habits are important for members to be able to learn new skills to use that can help them function better during difficult times. It's really hard for people to change the causes of stress in their lives, but they can change the way they deal with those causes. Having some basic tips can further members' abilities to change their moods.

FACILITATOR:

To facilitate this lesson effectively, it is helpful to have experience or training as a facilitator in other areas of chapter operations or campus life. If you have a member who is or has been a resident assistant, student organization leader, peer advocate or is studying to be a teacher, they could be an excellent facilitator for this program.

TIME NEEDED:

25 minutes



OBJECTIVES:

- Explain four skills that can help improve a sister's mood.
- Practice new habits that can help a sister maintain positive mental health.
- Understand a basic explanation of neuroscience.

SETTING:

- Choose a room that offers a lot of open space for small groups to be able to spread out and not be distracted by others. Members will need to be able to either sit and gather on the floor or move chairs around into small groups.
- You will show a PowerPoint presentation and play a video during the lesson, so connect a laptop to a projector and screen.
- *If facilitating virtually, you should practice the presentation on your video conference platform to ensure the PowerPoint, video, microphone and sound are all working accordingly. You should read the Purpose of Lesson below and review the facilitation guide to be aware of exercises that will need to be adjusted to the virtual experience.*

GROUP SIZE:

Members will be working individually or in pairs for this lesson.



MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Projector and screen
- “Neuroscience of Happiness” PowerPoint
- For each person: Lesson 7 handout and a pen

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THIS LESSON

PURPOSE OF LESSON:

The purpose of the seventh lesson is to give members more actions they can take to improve their mood. Neuroscientists have conducted evidence-based studies to identify some important habits to help members in a variety of ways.

The first activity you will do helps members label a negative feeling. It's common for members to have a lot of emotions. When they let those emotions build up and don't name them, it can cause a lot of harm. Naming negative emotions like sadness, anger, nervousness or feeling depressed activates a different part of the brain and relieves the tension. This activity will require self-awareness for members, and it's important to have them identify emotions in a non-judgmental manner.

The second activity is to have members write down one thing they dislike in their lives and then write down three things they are grateful for in their lives. Identifying what members are grateful for releases the same neurotransmitters as antidepressants do. Practicing gratitude on a daily basis can change members' brains and help them when they are going through a difficult time.

The third activity is to teach members that making a decision can relieve tension and help improve their mood. When members have a lot of homework or projects to do, they can often feel paralyzed because they don't know where to begin. Making a decision, even a small decision, can help a sister feel better. Procrastination and feeling overwhelmed from having a lot to do can paralyze a sister. Making small decisions can bring them out of that short paralysis and allow them to take smaller steps to a larger goal.

The fourth activity is to have members better understand the benefits of touch. In this digital world that we live in, it's common to go long periods of time without touching someone or being held. Social exclusion activates the same areas of the brain as physical pain. Human touch can increase positive neurotransmitters and lessen the chemicals involved in chronic stress.

Practicing these four activities on a daily basis can be really beneficial to a sister's mental health.

FACILITATOR TIPS:

To facilitate this lesson effectively it is helpful to do the following:

1. Connect to members early about why mental health is important to you and why it should be important to them. If you have a personal story about why you care about mental health, then share it if you're comfortable doing so. Let members know they should take this seriously. The more that you can make yourself vulnerable and relatable the more effective you will be as a facilitator.

2. Make yourself vulnerable with a boundary. If you are going to share part of your personal story, make sure you share something that you are comfortable with and have processed. For example, if you share that you care about this issue, because you have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder and it affected part of your life, then the members see you presenting from a place of strength. If you share something that you are still processing and become emotional, then the members may think they need to take care of you. It's helpful if you can be real about why you care and reinforce what you learned from your experiences.
3. Keep the exercises concise. If you give members too much time, they can devolve into so many other unnecessary conversations. Keep members focused.
4. Allow the exercises to be tools for members to identify how to work on mental health, but do not let lessons become therapy. There's a difference between members identifying what they can work on and voicing all of their experiences or pain. Stress that you want to start conversations but that they can do the work outside of the lessons. This is a public health approach to mental health and not a therapeutic approach.
5. Focus on connecting members to their emotions and each other. Have fun when you can. Be positive. Make it a team-building exercise that strengthens communication and connection.
6. It is important to let members know that lessons about mental health require everyone to be open, honest and non-judgmental. Members who share their stories need to feel safe and that the values of your organization are being upheld. Reinforce that the main goal is to start conversations about mental health in a way that can bring everyone together.
7. If a member is sharing their story extensively and continues to provide more details about their life than the lesson is asking for, it is OK to let them know that you hear their story and also want to hear from other members. Remind all members that these lessons are a start to this topic and provide ways to open conversations that can be continued after the lessons are over.
8. The recommended time for each lesson is 20-25 minutes. This gives you enough time to do each exercise; however, you might find that the group you are facilitating wants to spend more time on certain exercises. It is OK to do this when you feel that the group is having a discussion that will help everyone address mental health in a meaningful manner. Show the slide that sets the ground rules for the conversation at the beginning of the lesson and make sure everyone agrees the ground rules.
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NEUROSCIENCE OF HAPPINESS VIDEO (2 MINUTES)

Watch the introduction video for lesson 7. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

INTRODUCTION

NEUROSCIENCE OF HAPPINESS:

- We're going to go through a lesson about mental health. This is a serious topic that affects all of us and can be really sensitive for members. If at any time you are triggered by the content in this lesson, you can choose to not participate in the activities or leave the room to talk to someone who can help you.
- Being honest, open and non-judgmental of each other during these exercises will help us learn more about mental health and each other. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Everyone on social media seems to be so happy. Every. Single. Day. We constantly see images and messages of people celebrating, crushing it and enjoying their lives. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- But not all of us are happy, and that's OK. Feeling down, feeling anxious, feeling ashamed and alone or just not feeling super happy are all totally normal. Just because they're normal emotions, though, doesn't make them pleasant. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Fortunately, neuroscience offers some solutions. While how you feel isn't something you can totally control, there are simple steps you can take to nudge your brain towards happiness. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- This lesson is going to cover four rituals you can do to help you when you're not feeling great. It's not just about how you feel, it's about what's going on in your brain. Let's explore what neuroscience can teach us about being happy. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

EXERCISE 1 (7 MINUTES)



INSTRUCTIONS: (LABEL NEGATIVE EMOTIONS)

- The emotional part of the brain is perfectly content to make things difficult for you without you even being aware of it. While sometimes simply distracting yourself from a negative emotion is enough to make it go away, that doesn't always work.
- In fact, the opposite approach can be even more beneficial in the long term: instead of ignoring your emotions and hoping they'll go away, pay attention to them and name them. So when you're sad or angry or nervous, label the specific emotion that you're feeling. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- While you may not want to be the one ranting on social media, neuroscience has found that naming your emotions when you're upset changes parts of your brain.

- When you hold onto emotions, you activate the parts of the brain focused on impulse and fight-or-flight. However, by naming the emotion, you activate a different part of the brain that relieves the tension. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- The key is to notice how you feel in a non-judgmental way. Don't assess whether it's good or bad to feel that way; just notice what you're feeling.
- Don't get mad at yourself for being sad or get stressed that you're feeling anxious – just label it. This type of non-judgmental awareness is a key feature of mindfulness and has been shown to increase happiness and well-being. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Take a minute to look within yourself and see what emotions you're feeling right now. You may find that as you do this, new emotions pop up – just notice and label these as well.
- Start by taking a few deep breaths, slow and smooth. Pause for a second at the top of the inhale, and again at the bottom. Then let yourself breathe as you would normally. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- On your handout, locate the separate headings for positive, negative and neutral. Write down all of the emotions that you can label that you have felt today or this week. Separate the emotions into the categories. Pay attention to how it feels to write down the negative emotions. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



SHARE:

- Share some of the emotions that you felt today or this week.
- Was it difficult for you to identify the emotions that you feel? If yes, why do you think it's difficult to identify emotions?
- How did it feel to label the negative emotions? **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

FACILITATOR NOTES:

If members are struggling to share their emotions in this activity, then you can have them do this exercise in pairs. It's also helpful if you share all of the emotions that you have felt today and what was happening to cause you to feel those emotions.

- *If facilitating this lesson virtually, you can put the pairs into breakout rooms for the exercise.*

SUMMARIZE:

- Labeling negative feelings doesn't fix how you feel. In fact, you can't fix feelings, because there's nothing wrong with them. Naming a feeling just lessens the tension around it. You'll need to take some of the other steps in this lesson to move towards more positive emotions. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

- The human brain pays attention more to negative events than positive events. The brain does this as a survival mechanism. In the early days for humans, we needed to pay attention to what could kill us. Now, we don't have to worry about that as much, but our brains have gravitated toward gossip, drama and other negative events.

CHANGE PPT SLIDE

- Labeling negative emotions is just the beginning of doing the work to activate a part of your brain to relieve tension and reassure yourself that it is OK to have this emotion. Let's move on to the other exercises to increase happiness. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

EXERCISE 2 (7 MINUTES)

INSTRUCTIONS: (WHAT ARE YOU GRATEFUL FOR?)

- Identifying what you are grateful for activates the same neurotransmitters as antidepressants. The more you practice being grateful, the more automatically your brain will respond and the easier it gets to use gratitude.
- Practicing gratitude can help you connect more to yourself and others. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- On your handout, write down one thing you dislike in your life. Pay attention to how it feels.
- Next, write down three things you are grateful for. It could be a person, place, experience, pet or anything you are really grateful to have in your life. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



SHARE:

- What are some things that people are grateful for?
- What was the difference you felt when you wrote down what you disliked vs. what you are grateful for?
- How can you practice being grateful each day? **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

FACILITATOR NOTES:

If members are struggling to share what they are grateful for in this activity, then you can have them do this exercise in pairs. It's also helpful if you share what you are grateful for.

- *If facilitating this lesson virtually, you can put the pairs into breakout rooms for the exercise.*

- If you find things to be grateful for but don't feel grateful, that's fine. Don't get upset with yourself for not feeling grateful (Remember step 1? It takes practice). Even if you don't find anything that makes you feel particularly grateful, simply reminding yourself to look in the first place will help train your brain to keep looking on its own. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Practicing gratitude can take time, and it can make a big difference in your brain. Having a gratitude journal that you write in each night, keeping a note on your phone, writing thank you letters to the people you love or just expressing gratitude whenever you feel it can make a big difference with your mood. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

EXERCISE 3 (7 MINUTES)



INSTRUCTIONS: (MAKE A DECISION)

- This fast-paced life is filled with an endless number of decisions. It's easy to feel overwhelmed and stuck in a place of not knowing what to do. Luckily, making a decision, even a small one, helps you feel better.
- Making a decision includes creating intentions to act and setting specific goals. All of these actions activate parts of the brain that reduce worry and anxiety.
- You don't need to make the biggest or best decisions to feel better. You don't need to be perfect. In fact, perfectionism stresses us out even more. You just need to make a decision that is good enough to move you forward. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Look at Kali's story on your handout and write down some small decisions that Kali could make in her life. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Every week, Kali is often overwhelmed by college and her social life. She has homework and reading to do in every class that she has. She plays a sport. She volunteers at a local hospital. She has a partner who likes to text her throughout the day. She also really loves her friends and can never seem to find enough time to see them. When she gets to her room and wants to sit down to work on her homework or read a textbook for class, she often shuts down. She doesn't know where to begin. She texts her partner and her friends. She scrolls through social media. She listens to music. She does lots of things, but she doesn't do her work. She does all of this for a few hours before she realizes that it's late and she should get something done. She chooses to do whatever assignment is due the next day. She starts it so late that she doesn't get a lot of sleep and has to work on another project in the morning before class. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Write down two small decisions Kali could make to help change her constant feeling of being overwhelmed. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



SHARE:

- Do you know anyone who has a life similar to Kali?
- What are some small decisions they can make? **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

SUMMARIZE:

- There are a lot of options for Kali to begin practicing in order to make better decisions:
 - She could choose one subject to work on early in the day and just work on that.
 - She could have a planner for all of the homework and reading she has for the week.
 - She could use a schedule to block off time for volunteering, block off time for studying and block off time for socializing.
 - She could create clear boundaries and not need to text at all times of the day in order to be able to do her work.
 - She could lessen some of her extracurricular activities.
 - She could not have her phone open when she's studying so she isn't distracted. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- The main thing that Kali and people like her need to do is to make a clear decision about some aspect of their lives. The longer that the uncertainty of all of the possible decisions swirls in your head, the harder it is to feel like you're making progress.
- Even if you make the wrong decision, making one in the first place will still lessen your anxiety, activate parts of your brain to relieve tension and help you get closer to a balanced or happy life. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

EXERCISE 4 (7 MINUTES)

FACILITATOR NOTES:

This activity focuses on human touch. Not being able to touch others or be hugged is significantly impacting mental health. If facilitating virtually, members will not be able to physically touch each other. You are welcome to skip this exercise and go to the Summarize section of the lesson. If comfortable doing so, you could ask members to break for 3-5 minutes to find a friend or family member within close proximity to practice physical touch. If you move forward with this option, members should still ask for consent to hugging or touching others.

- When people feel excluded, it doesn't register in the brain as just emotional pain. It actually registers like a broken leg. Social exclusion activates the same areas of the brain as a broken leg. The difference is that you can see a broken leg, but you can't see a broken heart.
- Fortunately, a neurotransmitter and hormone, can help. Oxytocin is the love and trust molecule, and helps reduce painful feelings of social exclusion. And one of the easiest ways to boost oxytocin is through physical touch. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Human touch not only increases oxytocin, it also decreases the stress hormone cortisol. Research shows that 5 hugs a day for four weeks significantly increases happiness. If you have people to hug, make sure you hug them – and not one of those quick pat-on-the-back hugs. Embrace them. It changes your brain. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- And with hugs, it doesn't really matter if you're giving or getting. In practical terms, offering to give someone hug is often easier than asking for one, and you still get all the same benefits. Though it's perfectly ok to ask for a hug.
- In this current pandemic, if you don't have anyone to hug, smaller touches are still beneficial and there are other options. It's extremely beneficial to pet or hold an animal to release oxytocin. Taking care of a plant can also help a person feel connected in a meaningful way. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

OPTION 1

• You can do this exercise with a friend, family member or pet that is in your proximity. We're going to take some time for you to hug 5 people. Before you hug someone you need to ask for their consent to see if it is ok. If someone does not consent to hugging you, move on and ask someone else. If you do not like to give hugs or be hugged at all, it is ok to not participate in this activity. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

OPTION 2

• You can do this exercise with a friend, family member or pet that is in your proximity. In order to see how touch can impact a person. You're going to ask two different people how they are doing. You are going to ask, "How are you?" The first time you ask don't touch them. The second time you ask, place your hand on their forearm, shoulder or put your arm around them. Before you touch someone you need to ask for their consent to see if it is ok. If someone does not consent to letting you touch them, move on and ask someone else. If you do not like to give touched or touch others at all, it is ok to not participate in this activity. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



SHARE:

• What were the differences between being touched by someone or a pet and not being touched? **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

SUMMARIZE:

- Practicing these four skills together on a regular basis can greatly impact and change your mood. It's important to practice them long enough for you to form a habit.
- Pop psychology likes to say that habits are formed in 30 days. However, these skills require you to change behavior that you may have around these activities including insecurities and bad coping skills. It will take much longer than 30 days to change those behaviors because they are deeper neural pathways that some of you may have been using for a long time. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- The sooner you start these habits, the better you will get at them so try to start one today!

Please remind members that they should take the survey at the link provided. Show the QPR code on the screen and ask for confirmation that members took the post-test.

https://corexmstcmk6ytnfrbb6.sjc1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_50CU0PA1vbCPvV3



Lesson 7 Handout

LABEL NEGATIVE FEELINGS

In the following categories (positive, negative and neutral), write down all of the emotions you can label that you have felt today. Separate the emotions into one of the three categories. Pay attention to how it feels to write down the negative emotions.

POSITIVE	NEUTRAL	NEGATIVE

GRATITUDE

Write down one thing you dislike in your life. Pay attention to how it feels.

Next, write down three things you are grateful for. That could be a person, place, experience, pet or anything you are really grateful to have in your life.



MAKE A DECISION

Every week, Kali is often overwhelmed by college and her social life. She has homework and reading to do in every class that she has. She plays a sport. She volunteers at a local hospital. She has a partner who likes to text her throughout the day. She also really loves her friends and can never seem to find enough time to see them. When she gets to her room and wants to sit down to work on her homework or read a textbook for class, she often shuts down. She doesn't know where to begin. She texts her partner and her friends. She scrolls through social media. She listens to music. She does lots of things, but she doesn't do her work. She does all of this for a few hours before she realizes that it's late and she should get something done. She chooses to do whatever assignment is due the next day. She starts it so late that she doesn't get a lot of sleep and has to work on another project in the morning before class.

Write down two small decisions Kali could make to help change her constant feeling of being overwhelmed.