

Foundations

How can I make myself happy?

Best for ages 3-8. **The purpose of this discussion is two-folded: to help children learn that they are responsible for their own happiness and to offer practical suggestions to actualize this. This discussion stresses the imperative value of attitude and perspective as it relates to one's happiness and experiences throughout life.**

- Note – The table talk for ages 9 and up in Cheshvan's Foundations discussed this concept. That table talk was geared towards older kids while this one designed for younger kids.

Ask your child to identify some things that make them happy, some things that make them sad, and some things that make them angry (a fun way to phrase this to kids is: glad, sad and mad).

Once your child identifies a few things, ask them, if they had the choice, what feeling they prefer. Explore the feeling of happiness with your child and the overall enjoyment of a happy state of mind.

Help your child learn the concept of looking at the positive side of things by using some of their "sad" and "mad" examples and challenging them to identify any "up-side" to them. Explore with your child the importance of attitude and perspective and assist them with practicing this principle when they are upset.

- Note – it is crucial to stress to your child that looking at the positive of a "sad" situation does not and should not invalidate their feelings. Help your child understand the importance of recognizing and accepting their feelings, even when they are not positive, while still practicing resilience and working to see the positive side of things.
- Note – due to the many nuances of teaching this concept to young children, the sample conversation is extensive. The sample conversation is merely an outline for your guidance.

Sample Conversation:

Parent: Let's talk about different feelings that you have sometimes, like feeling glad, sad or mad. What are some things that make you feel glad?

Child: I feel glad when I have ice cream, when we go to Chuckie Cheese and when it's the summer and I can play outside.

Parent: Those are great things! What are some things that make you feel sad?

Child: Um, I don't know. When I fall and get hurt. Or when I want to go somewhere but I can't.

Parent: Those things do make you sad, I know. What about mad? What are some things that make you mad?



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(Sample Conversation Continued)

Child: I get mad when Yoni takes my toys without asking. I also get mad when I lose stuff.

Parent: Both of those situations are really upsetting, yes. When you think about all those feelings, which one do you like feeling the most? Mad, sad, or glad?

Child: Well, I like being happy more than mad or sad!

Parent: I agree. Being happy just makes the whole day better, no? You know, sometimes when I feel mad or sad I try to look at the thing that made me feel that way and find something good in it, because, like you, I really like feeling glad more than mad or sad. When I do that, I usually feel better quicker and stay mad or sad for less time.

Child: Something good?

Parent: Yup! Let's say you are mad about Yoni playing with your toys without asking. What's something good that you can think of from that situation?

Child: Um....well, I know that he likes my toys so maybe if I talk to him he will play with me and we can play together?

Parent: That's a great point! Maybe he will play with you or maybe he won't, but it's so great to start learning how to look for good things when things make you upset. Of course, this doesn't mean that you should pretend not to be upset when you are. But it can really help you feel better when you look for something positive when things make you feel sad.



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