

3

What Makes Me Happy?

In this chapter you have a chance to take a deep dive into what gives us pleasure. Although you might think this topic was already covered in the worksheets in Chapter 2 that help kids figure out what they're good at, what we're good at doing and what makes us happy aren't always the same. The difference between aptitude and pleasure is that pleasure implies children are doing those activities with enjoyment. Many unmotivated kids either don't know what gives them pleasure or are stuck doing things they're good at doing but that don't make them happy. For example, Maya was great at soccer. She spent 6 years playing soccer on a travel team, but by the time she was 14 years old, she was tired of the sport. Although she was the best player on the team, she didn't enjoy it anymore. Her parents insisted she continue playing, and she reacted by giving up on almost everything. Unfortunately,

her life—and the life of her family—had revolved around soccer and she had trouble figuring out how to fill her time with something she enjoyed doing.

It *should* be easy to figure out what makes us happy, but in reality *it's not that easy*. “Do what makes you happy” is a popular piece of advice to college graduates, but what exactly does that mean? We adults aren’t that good at identifying the things that make us happy, and often even if we know what makes us happy, we don’t spend a lot of time doing those things. No wonder it’s hard for kids! Kids have little trouble figuring out what is boring. It’s much more difficult for them to engage in discussions about what gives them joy.

This chapter is all about helping kids answer the questions “What gives you pleasure?” and “What makes you happy?” The chapter starts with activities that help kids identify their favorite things, the activities that are fun for them, and the times in their lives when they felt at their best (pages 52–56). Some activities help them identify the things that get in the way of pleasure (page 57) and ways to increase their daily and weekly pleasure (pages 58–64). The last group of activities (pages 65–67) helps them develop a sense of gratitude. Feeling gratitude is an essential skill associated with many positive psychological and health benefits, such as improved sleep, reduced depression, and higher self-esteem. Often the things we are thankful for are also things that bring us pleasure. For kids who have trouble recognizing what gives them pleasure, focusing on gratitude can help them identify specific activities that bring them joy. Developing a regular gratitude practice can also help kids stay engaged when motivation inevitably starts to ebb.

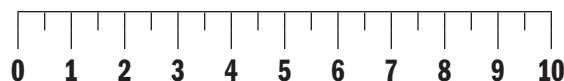
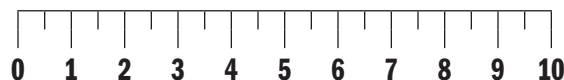
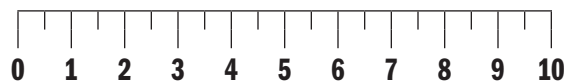
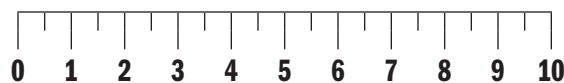
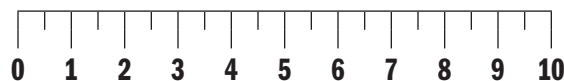
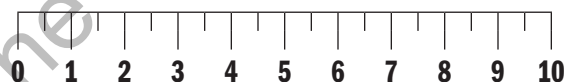
These Are a Few of My Favorite Things

What brings you pleasure? What things make you happy? On the lines below, write down different things that bring you a lot of fun when you get to do them. These can be anything! Then use the ruler to mark and rate how much pleasure it brings you.

Hint: If it feels hard to get started on this activity, try thinking about things that you can notice with your senses (like things that smell good or taste good). You can also look at your work on “Here I Am” (page 21) for ideas.

“I like looking at pictures from when I was little.”

—AURORA, AGE 14



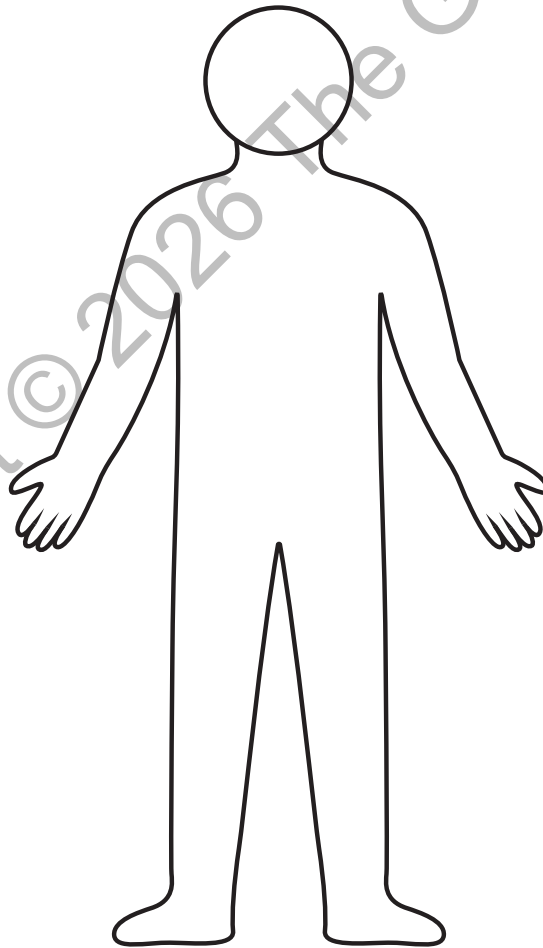
Feeling Fun

Sometimes, when our motivation is running low, it can be hard to remember what pleasure feels like. Yet we know that emotions are made up of three main parts—thoughts, behaviors, and body cues—and what *fun* feels like for you is important information for you to have. Use the sketch below to color (or describe with words) and show what it **feels like in your body** when you are having fun. There are no rules here—how you show it is up to you.

Hint: If you have trouble getting started on this one, jump to “When Was the Last Time I Had Fun?” on page 55 and then come back to this one. What does it feel like when you think about having fun?

“When I am having fun, my brain feels warm and sparkly.”

—JENNA, AGE 11



My Favorite Age

The past is full of rich information that you can use to make your *right now* better. For this activity, think about the time in your life when you felt your happiest.

My favorite age was when I was: _____

Include pictures, sketches, cartoons, or words about you that represent what it was like when you were your favorite age:



It was a happy time because of the people I was with, like my ... (please **shade in or highlight**)

Parents	Grandparents	Siblings	Aunts	Uncles
Cousins	Stepfamily	Neighbors	Friends	Teammates
Boyfriend/girlfriend	Coaches	Teachers	Therapist	Youth group

My favorite things to do were ...

Nowadays, it makes me feel like my favorite age again when I ...

When Was the Last Time I Had Fun?

The kinds of activities and situations that were enjoyable for you before can hold a lot of information about what is fun for you now. In this activity, think about the last time you really enjoyed yourself. The questions below help you reflect on why it was as much fun as it was and whether there are ways of experiencing that fun again.

“The last time I had a lot of fun was when I won tickets to see my favorite band. I’ll never forget that night!” —AARON, AGE 16

“The last time I had a lot of fun was when I made jewelry using the new supplies I got for my birthday.” —CAMILA, AGE 13

The last time I had a lot of fun, I was at ...

And I was with ...

And I was doing ...

I think I WILL / WILL NOT (**circle or highlight** one) do this again because ...

Sometimes people know what they would like to do, but for different reasons it is hard for them to turn that knowledge about it into a plan they can carry out. This is true even for making plans that are fun. If this sounds like you, look ahead to the activity “Turning Ideas into Action Plans” (pages 112–113).

Surprising Fun!

We are often very good at predicting the things we will enjoy and the things we will not. Sometimes, though, fun can take us by surprise. This can give us new information about who we are and what we like (and what we don't like, which is important information too). For each of the prompts below, write a few words or draw or paste in a picture (or an emoji!) to remind yourself about each time this has happened to you.

“I was really excited to go snowboarding for the first time, but I spent the whole day falling down on my butt! It ended up being hard, painful, and not much fun for me, even though I know lots of kids really like it, and I thought I would too. I'm probably not going to go snowboarding again, but I'm glad I tried it.”

—SIMON, AGE 16

A time that you thought something was going to be very fun ... and it turned out to be just as fun as you'd thought:

A time that you thought something was not going to be very fun ... but it turned out to be more fun than you'd expected:

A time that you thought something was going to be very fun ... but it turned out not to be as much fun as you'd thought:

A time that you thought something was not going to be fun ... and you were totally right—it wasn't fun at all:

Don't Marsh My Mellow!

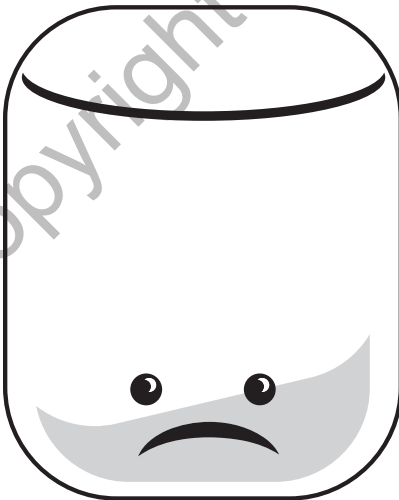
Unfortunately, a lot of things can get in the way of having fun or make fun times less fun. Can you identify some of the things that marsh your mellow? Write them in below.

“It always bugs me when my dad asks me about doing my homework as soon as I'm home from school. I need to relax first!”

—JAMES, AGE 15

“Sometimes when I am with my friends, I start thinking about all the work I need to do for school, and that doesn't feel so good.”

—ALEX, AGE 13



Best. Day. Ever.

Imagine what it would feel like to have the best day EVER. Try not to focus too much on what's possible and what isn't—for this activity, the sky's the limit!

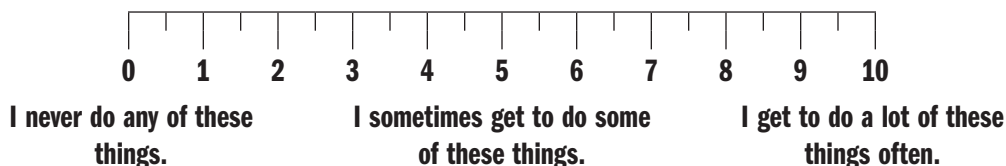
“On my best day ever, I would go with my two best friends to this cool place near my apartment where they have indoor mini-golf and Ping Pong. I'd eat lots of pizza and ice cream, and I wouldn't think about any stressful stuff at all.”

—LOGAN, AGE 13

Where I would go:	What I would do during the day:	What I would do during the evening:
Who I would spend time with:	What I would eat and drink:	What I would think about:

Use the space below to picture your best day ever. You can write about it, draw it, or paste in pictures to make a collage.

Put an **X** on the rule to mark how often you currently get to do the things that would be part of your best day ever:



Best Day Ever—With a Twist

Look back at the fun ideas you came up with in “Best. Day. Ever.” (page 58). This activity is meant to challenge you to think of some new ideas for having fun. Often, working within constraints or boundaries (like the ones the questions below give you) helps people tap into their creativity and discover new ideas and solutions.

What would a really fun day look like if ... you weren't able to use any screens or technology for the whole day?

“I would pack a picnic with all my favorite foods, and I would go fishing and day camping in the woods.”

—HANNAH, AGE 14

What would a really fun day look like if ... you could only spend \$10?

“I would go to the library in my town, find a comfy chair, and read a bunch of graphic novels.”

—FELIX, AGE 12

What would a really fun day look like if ... you couldn't travel farther than one block from where you live?

“I would invite my friends over to my house for a glow-in-the-dark dance party.”

—IRIS, AGE 15

What would a really fun day look like if ... you couldn't spend any of the day at home?

"I would ask my aunt to take me on a road trip to a town I've never been to before."

—THEO, AGE 14

What would a really fun day look like if ... you had to spend the whole day by yourself?

"I would rewatch the TV shows that I used to like when I was little."

—NOLAN, AGE 16

What would a really fun day look like if ... you didn't have to follow any of the household rules that you usually have to follow?

"I would probably do the things I was supposed to do anyway, just on my own time frame."

—LIBBY, AGE 14

Keeping a Happiness Calendar

When it comes to creating happiness, having frequent experiences that spark pleasure is often more helpful than having infrequent experiences that bring a LOT of pleasure. This activity helps you find ways to boost your happiness in a simple, day-to-day way. Below are examples of simple pleasures that often make people feel good. Planning for happiness by putting activities like these on your calendar is one way to infuse more fun and happiness into your life.

Examples of mood-boosting activities:

Going to the Dollar Store	Eating a piece of candy	Giving your pet extra attention
Having a phone or video call with your favorite relative	Doing a craft project	Cooking or baking something
Painting, coloring, or drawing	Walking to a convenience store to get a treat	Rereading a favorite book
Painting your fingernails or toenails (or getting someone else to do it for you!)	Styling your hair in a different way from usual	Watching an online tutorial to do fancy makeup
Going to an arcade to play different video games	Looking at old pictures or videos from when you were little	Looking at old artwork or schoolwork that you did when you were little
Playing catch with a friend or family member	Making slime	Making a greeting card for someone else
Planning for a special event	Going to a library or used bookstore	Going to a consignment or thrift store
Going to a favorite restaurant for a meal or dessert	Going to a new restaurant that you have been wanting to try	Going to a sporting goods store and looking at and trying out all the equipment
Reading a new magazine	Taking a bath with a bath bomb	Buying and using a new body lotion or scent

THE MOTIVATION MINDSET WORKBOOK

What are some of your mood-boosting activities that aren't listed on page 61? If you need help getting started, try looking at your work on "These Are a Few of My Favorite Things" at the beginning of this chapter (page 52).

Making a plan to have fun, putting it on your calendar, and telling other people about your plans are ways to increase the chances of your doing the things that will bring you pleasure. Not having a clear plan can make it a lot easier to forget to do fun stuff or to allow other not-so-fun stuff to crowd out the time you were going to spend having fun. See below for an example of what planning for fun might look like on someone's calendar:

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
In a.m.: take Trixie for an extra-long walk to the dog park	After school: go to Dollar Store and get new nail polish, bath bombs, and art supplies	In p.m.: mani/pedi with new polish after homework is done	After school: call Aunt Susan	In p.m.: make a card for Gramps's birthday	In p.m.: take a bath with a bath bomb	In afternoon: go to arcade with my friends

What fun events can you put on your calendar? Try filling in the calendar below for yourself:

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.

Same Old, Same Old . . .

But Fun This Time

There are a lot of things that kids have to do that definitely aren't that fun, and we bet you can think of a few. There are also lots of things that kids have to do that are pretty neutral—they're not terrible, but they're not really that fun either. Below is a list of ordinary things kids often have to do, as well as a list of ways to make an activity more fun (or at least different from usual). **Your job is to connect one activity from the left column and one option for making it fun from the right column (drawing a line between them or highlighting them) and see what happens.**

Same old, same old . . .

Taking care of a pet (like going for a walk, cleaning a litter box, or giving your pet a bath)

Traveling to and from your school

Brushing your teeth

Taking a bath or shower

Picking out your clothes

Doing laundry

Washing the dishes, loading the dishwasher, or putting clean dishes away

. . . But fun this time

Pretend that you are a sports commentator and give a running commentary (either silently or out loud) on whatever you are doing.

Pay attention to each one of your senses (sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing) while you're doing what you're doing, and see what you notice.

Either in your head or out loud, make up a rhyming poem (à la Dr. Seuss) that describes what you are doing.

Do whatever you're doing in the reverse order of how you'd usually do it.

For 1 minute, try to do the thing you are doing with your eyes closed (so long as it's safe!) and see what happens.

Try doing the activity with your nondominant hand (using your left hand if you are a righty and vice versa).

Sing a song or play music while doing the activity.

Lighting a Lamp

Doing something helpful or kind for someone (or something) else is an unexpected source of pleasure for many people. Below are some ideas to try out the next time you are having a hard day, need a pleasure boost, are feeling bored, or just because! Use the thermometer to rate how much fun you think each activity would be for you.

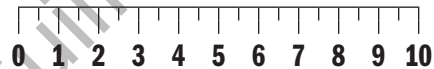
Take care of a family pet (like taking your dog on an extra walk, giving your dog a bath, or cleaning your cat's litter box).



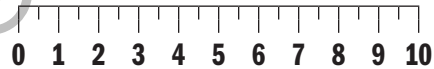
Do something to care for your family's living space (like wiping down the counters, unloading the dishwasher, or organizing a cluttered space).



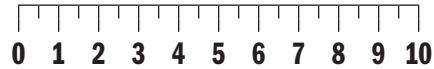
Text or call a relative just to say "hi."



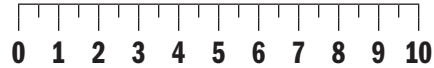
Sort through the clothes or toys you don't use anymore and pack them up for donating.



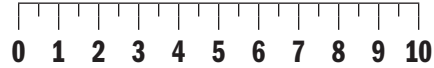
Write a note to a former teacher, coach, or other adult who means a lot to you.



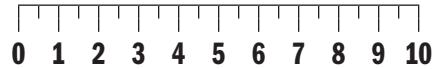
Spend extra time with a sibling or younger family member.



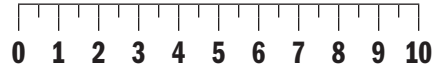
Volunteer at a local organization that accepts and needs drop-in volunteers (like sorting donations and supplies at a food pantry).



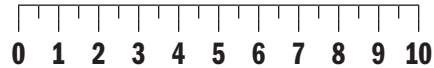
Show a relative or another adult how to use their technology.



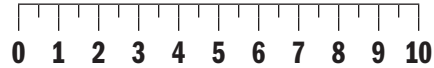
Make something creative (like a picture, photograph, or poem) for someone else.



Offer to help a neighbor with a household task or chore.



Do something to benefit your favorite setting (for example, picking up trash at a local park).



If you feel ready to try one of these activities, go for it! See what you notice when you act in service of someone or something else. If this sounds appealing to you but you're not quite sure how to put it into motion, look ahead to "Turning Ideas into Action Plans" on pages 112–113.

What Is Gratitude?

Research shows us that there are many benefits of incorporating gratitude into daily life. Some people confuse practicing gratitude with toxic positivity ("good vibes only!"). Practicing gratitude is very different. It involves shifting your attention, on purpose, to the things you have, instead of focusing on the things you do not have. Practicing gratitude also has to do with recognizing that things can be beautiful, even when they are hard, and appreciating that bad things, but also great things, happen every day.

Take a moment and think about something you are grateful for. Illustrate or write about it here:



Practicing Gratitude

“When I went to my grandfather’s house for dinner, he made everyone say one thing they were grateful for before the food was served. I acted like I thought it was dumb, but it actually made me less worried about stuff that didn’t matter. Nowadays, I try to take a picture every day of something that I’m grateful for. When I’m feeling down or discouraged, I look through my phone, and it helps me focus on what I really want.”

—TAREEK, AGE 16

Below are some ways that kids make gratitude a part of their everyday lives. Take a look and color in or highlight the ones that you could see yourself trying, even once:

Taking a picture of something colorful or beautiful

Writing a thank you note or email to someone who has helped you

In a lined notebook, writing down one thing per day that you are grateful for

Keeping a gratitude sketchbook or scrapbook, where you can draw and craft the things you are grateful for

Pausing and taking a quiet moment to visualize something you are grateful for

Before going to bed, thinking about one thing that happened that day that you are grateful for

Finally, we encourage you to plan to practice gratitude at least once a day for a full week. You might choose to practice the same way each day, or this could be an opportunity to experiment with different ways of practicing gratitude to help you figure out what feels right to you. Fill in the worksheet below with your gratitude practice:

Day and date	Time of day	How I practiced gratitude
Monday, February 26	7:00 a.m.	I thought about the things in my life that I'm grateful for while brushing my teeth and washing my face.

After practicing gratitude each day for a full week, what do you notice?

you feel your happiest. Based on what you've learned about yourself and how you feel pleasure, fill in the lines below:

Aptitude

Pleasure

Activities and situations that make me feel very happy and good on the inside:

Practice

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Aptitude

Pleasure

Activities and situations that make me feel very happy and good on the inside:

Practice

