

Understanding the Emotion: Happiness

Summary

In this unit, students will read a story about Paige, a young girl who loves to swim and finds happiness in the pool. However, she has to make a choice as to whether she should go swimming to make herself happy or spend time with her grandma, which makes her grandma happy.

Class Discussion

Spend a few minutes discussing the social-emotional vocabulary for this unit. Write the word *happy* on the board. Ask students to define the word for you and write their responses on the board. If time permits, have students share their prior knowledge and experience with the class regarding this emotion.

Remind students that happiness is a good emotion. When we are happy, our bodies feel different. Sometimes, we feel energized. Happiness is described as a warm, fuzzy feeling inside. Studies show that happiness is an emotion that helps us in many ways. When we are happy, we are healthier. We get along better with our friends and family. And, happiness can be contagious! If we are happy and full of laughter, we can help spread that happiness to others who may not be feeling so happy.

Tell students that they will be reading a story about a child who is happy when she gets to go swimming. One day, the child has to make a choice whether to go swimming or to play a game with her grandma. Read the story (pages 18–19) aloud and/or distribute copies of the story to students to follow along or read on their own. Have students choose an ending (page 20) either as a group or individually. (See page 4 for additional ideas for working with the stories and endings.)

Coping Skill Activity

Happiness is an emotion we strive to feel. There are ways to find happiness if we are feeling sad or just feeling blah. Exercise can make us happy. Spending time with our favorite people can make us happy. Laughter can brighten our days. One fast and easy coping skill to find happiness is to list the things that make us happy!

Have students create collages of things that make them happy. They can paint, draw, or even cut and paste photos from old magazines. Tell students to add as many happy things as they can fit onto the page. Feeling grateful and thankful for the simple things in life can increase our joy!

Personal Application

Have students come together as a whole group or in small groups to answer the discussion questions verbally. To conclude the unit, assign the written-response questions and the journal writing as a way for students to relate the story to their own understanding of happiness and times they have felt this emotion in their lives.

Sharing Joy

Paige loved to swim. Every weekend, her mom took her to the community pool. The pool was indoors, so Paige could swim even on cold days! Swimming made Paige feel happy. She twirled and floated on her back and blew bubbles under the water. She loved to pretend she was a mermaid. She thought about all the ways that she could save people with her mermaid swimming powers.

Paige could swim for hours. Paige's mom usually sat at the edge of the pool and watched her swim. Her mom sometimes threw diving rings into the pool. The rings sank to the bottom. Paige loved to jump into the deep water to collect all the rings.

"Mom, why don't you come swimming with me?" Paige said to her mom one day as she was splashing in the pool.

Her mom smiled. "I don't really like to swim," she said.

"Well, isn't it boring to just sit there and watch me swim?" Paige asked.

"Not at all," her mother replied. "Swimming makes you happy. And it makes me happy to see you doing something you love. Doing nice things for others makes me happy." Paige smiled back at her mom and dove under the water.

One Saturday, Paige woke up and quickly put on her swimsuit. She ran downstairs to eat breakfast. Paige's mom saw the swimsuit and smiled. "Paige, I know you want to go swimming today. But Grandma invited us to her house for lunch. Your cousins will be there too. Grandma misses everyone and gets lonely sometimes."

Paige sighed. She didn't really want to go to Grandma's house. She wanted to go swimming. Then she remembered that her grandma had a pool at her house. "Mom, can I swim at Grandma's house?"

Paige's mom paused for a moment. "You can bring your swimsuit, just in case. But I think you should spend time with your grandma," she said.

Paige got dressed but kept her swimsuit on underneath her clothes. She was going to figure out a way to swim at her grandma's house. As her mom was packing up the car, Paige had a great idea. She picked a few flowers from their yard. She tied them with a ribbon. "Those are beautiful," Paige's mom said when she saw the flowers.

Sharing Joy *(cont.)*

“I am going to give them to Grandma,” Paige replied.

The car ride to Grandma’s house took an hour. Paige felt bored. She groaned and stared out the window. “Mom, this trip takes so long,” Paige whined.

“Just remember that we are going to visit Grandma. She wants our company. Doing things for others should make you feel happy,” Paige’s mother said. Paige sighed. She closed her eyes and daydreamed about being a mermaid and swimming in the ocean. That made her feel happy.

Finally, they reached Grandma’s house. Paige ran to the door and knocked loudly. Her grandma answered the door and grinned. “Hi, Paige!” she said.

“These are for you,” Paige said, and gave the flowers to her grandma.

“Oh, these are so beautiful! Thank you!” Grandma said. Paige felt instantly happy. She knew how much her grandma loved the flowers. Her mom was right. It did make her happy to do nice things for others.

Paige was excited to see her cousins. They all sat together at Grandma’s big dining room table and ate turkey sandwiches for lunch. Paige didn’t like turkey sandwiches, but she ate hers anyway. She knew her grandma worked hard to make lunch for everyone. After lunch, Paige’s grandma pulled out a deck of cards. She loved playing card games. “Who wants to play cards?” Grandma asked.

But all the children stood up and ran to the back door. “We want to go swimming!” they yelled as they ran into the backyard.

Paige looked at her grandma. She knew that playing card games made her grandma happy. But Paige didn’t really like playing cards and always seemed to lose every game. She really wanted to go swimming.

Should Paige go swimming?

Making Choices

Choice 1–Yes

Paige loved swimming, and it made her happy. She didn't think about what might make her grandma happy. She followed her cousins outside to the pool. Paige dove into the pool over and over. She spent all afternoon in the water.

Paige's mom came outside and told her it was time to drive home. Paige got out of the pool and dried off. She saw her grandma sitting alone at the table. No one chose to play cards with her. Suddenly, Paige didn't feel so happy. She realized that she missed playing cards with her grandma.

On the way out, Paige gave her grandma a hug. She told her that next time she promised to play card games. Her grandma smiled and said "Okay." On the car ride home, Paige thought about happiness. Swimming didn't make her feel as happy when she saw her grandma looking lonely.

Choice 2–No

Paige loved swimming. But she thought about what her mom told her about making other people happy. She was thankful for her grandma. Today was a day to make her grandma happy. She stayed at the dining-room table with her grandma. She watched as everyone else went outside to swim.

Her grandma smiled and told Paige she would teach her some new card games. Paige was excited to learn the new games. She even won a few times! Her grandma told her funny stories from when she was a kid. Paige laughed when she thought of her grandma being a little girl.

Her grandma opened a jar on the table. She handed Paige a cookie. "Shhh," her grandma whispered. "That's just a treat for us to share."

Paige split the cookie in half and giggled as she handed the other half to her grandma. She was having such a good time that she forgot all about swimming. Paige's mom walked into the dining room to tell Paige it was time to drive home. Paige hugged her grandma and thanked her for the cookie.

On the drive home, Paige's mom asked her if she was sad that she didn't have time to swim. Paige thought about it. "No, Mom," Paige said. "Today I made Grandma happy and that made me happy! Just like when you watch me swim." Paige's mom smiled and nodded her head.

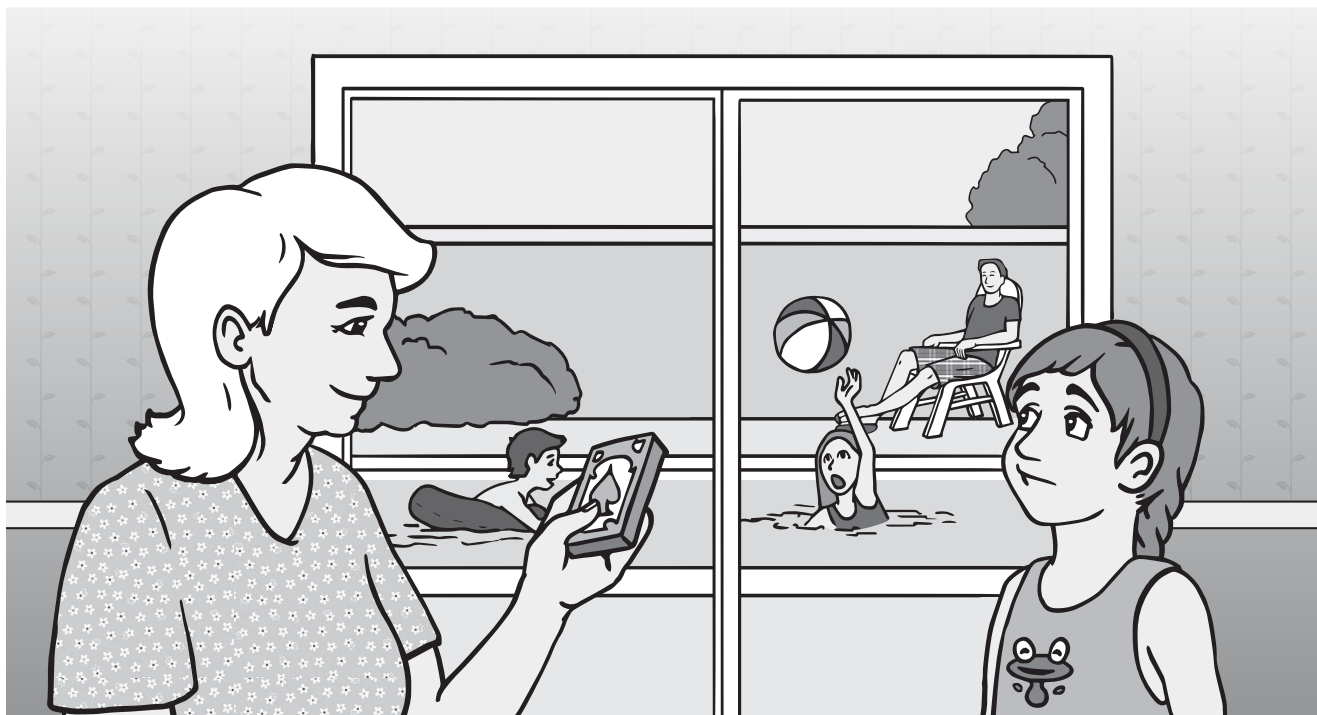
What Do You Think?

Choice 1

- 1 Why did Paige choose to go swimming?
- 2 How do you think Paige's grandma felt when all the children chose to swim?
- 3 What did Paige learn about happiness?
- 4 Do you think Paige will play cards with her grandma next time? Why or why not?

Choice 2

- 1 Why did Paige choose to play cards with her grandma?
- 2 How do you think Paige's grandma felt when Paige chose to play cards?
- 3 What did Paige learn about happiness?
- 4 Do you think Paige made a good choice? Why or why not?



What Would You Do?

- 1 Have you ever done something to make someone else happy? How did it make you feel?

- 2 Have your parents ever done things just to make you happy? What things did they do?

- 3 List five things that make you happy.

My Emotions: Happiness

Think about Paige and her choice to find happiness by making someone else happy. Write about your experience sharing happiness and what you learned.