

Make your own Happiness

When was the last time that someone randomly brightened your day? It's such a great feeling to have - and just as enjoyable when we do it for someone else! We each have the power to make someone happier or their lives easier. Each day - we can make this choice. And each time we do, that goodness ripples outwards. Let's do it!

In this activity, you'll choose someone close to you (sibling, best friend, parent), and create something unique for them, to make them smile.

Materials:

- Paper
- Pen/Pencil
- Timer
- Available materials, depending on project needs

Learning objectives:

- Observation
- Empathy
- Brainstorming
- Prototyping

Time required: 60 minutes

Context:

Have you ever heard of the Ripple Effect? Imagine dropping a small pebble into the water, and watching all of the ripples flow outward. The ripple effect exists across many fields: physics, business and economics, and even sociology. In our case, it's similar to people's tendency to "pay it forward" - if someone does something nice for me, then I might be more likely to do something nice for the next person. In this way, kindness can start with the action of one person, and ripple outwards to affect many others. Any of us can start that ripple.

The goal of this activity is to create a prototype to make someone in your life smile. Because we can, and we're all better off when we do. To do it well, it requires a good amount of observation (careful watching and noticing) and empathy (understanding others' feelings). When we design for other people, it is important to use observation and empathy to go beyond what we would like or want, and try to understand what the other person would like or want. There are many ways to try to get information about someone else, and observing them carefully is only one way. Maybe you do this naturally, and maybe it will take more of an effort for you. Now - let's figure out how to turn our observations and empathy into action!

Activity:

1. First - let's start with a quick creativity warm-up! Stand up. Time yourself for (90) seconds. During that 1.5 minutes, be an expression of joy and delight. Use your full body - face, arms, legs, everything! - and use gestures and movement. You can use sound or do this silently if you prefer. You are an athlete who just won an Olympic gold medal. You just found a million bucks. Someone just gave you a puppy. Whatever it is - express that joy and delight as fully as you possibly can. If someone asks you what the heck you're doing, say "tell you in a minute!" and keep going until the time is up! (Then you can explain it to them. Maybe recommend that they try it, too?)

2. Great! Hopefully, that was a nice energy boost and made you feel a bit happier, too. Our next step is to pick your smile-target. This is the person you're going to be designing for. You can pick a sibling, parent, or close friend. It should be someone that you see regularly and know what they do day-to-day. Don't tell them yet that you picked them - let's make it a surprise!

Activity:

3. Next, make a list of the small things they do each day, like “make breakfast” or “brush their teeth” or “bring me to the school bus.” Ideally, these are routine (probably boring) things that they do most days, and that you’ve seen them do. This is where our observation skills come in!

4. Now - we brainstorm! Pick (3) of the routines from the list you made. There are (3) objects for you to brainstorm with: a message, a piece of art, and a sound/speaker system. Let’s start with the message. Time yourself for (3) minutes. Come up with an idea for a message for while they’re doing that activity. For example, if I picked “brushing their teeth,” I’d think about a message that they’d find while they’re brushing their teeth. Maybe the idea is to have a message on the mirror. Or maybe a funny message. Super quickly write or sketch your idea - whatever the first thing is that pops into your head!

5. Now try again with the 2nd routine you picked. And then the third. So you’ll have (3) ideas for messages they can find. Try to come up with those 3 ideas in 3 minutes!

Activity:

6. Next, we'll do the same thing with the piece of art (come up with 3 ideas of a piece of art they could get while doing each routine). And then with the sound/speaker system. You should have (9) ideas at the end. Crazy ideas are welcome and encouraged.

7. Sweet! Nice work. Next, we're going to pick (1) idea to actually make. You can choose one from the ideas you brainstormed already, or come up with a new idea. The idea can express gratitude/ showing that you appreciate the person, encouragement (they're doing a great job!), or good luck/ you hope they have a nice day. Your idea should be something you can create in less than 1 hour, and you should only plan to use the materials you already have available. Use your empathy skills to pick the idea that the other person would like best. Sketch out your idea.

8. Alright - time to make it! Do the best you can. Remember: it's more important that you finish it than that it's perfect. The goal here is to brighten someone's day, so as long as you're able to do that, your project will be a success!

Activity:

9. Ok! Now the moment of truth. Deliver your project to the person in the way you planned to deliver it. Stand back and see what happens!

10. Spread the joy. We'd love to hear about what you made and what reaction it got! Share your project with us and see what other kids have made at @MadeToHack.

Reflection:

How did they react? Did they react differently than what you expected?

How would you do it differently next time?

Do you have ideas for other projects you'd like to do to make other people happy?

What is your biggest takeaway from this happiness experiment?

Happy Making!

-Team Hack