

Happy Thoughts Notebook (Levels A-B)

WRITTEN

To build early gratitude, emotional awareness, and positive mindset through simple reflection and expressive activities tailored for emerging communicators.



Learning Intentions

Self-Awareness:

Students will explore noticing something that made them feel happy or good today.



Emotional Expression:

Students will practise expressing a happy moment using pictures, gestures, drawings, or AAC.

Positive Thinking:

Students will begin to identify something they would like to do tomorrow that could make them feel happy.



Success Criteria

Students choose or show one happy moment from today using visuals, drawing, gesture, or AAC.



Students attempt to express how that moment made their body feel (e.g., happy, calm, excited).

Students choose one positive action they would like to try tomorrow.



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Duration: 10 - 20 minutes

Objective

To build early gratitude, emotional awareness, and positive mindset through simple reflection and expressive activities tailored for emerging communicators.

What You Need

Notebook or paper

Coloured pencils

Glue sticks

Picture cards of common happy activities: (found in PDF resource)

- playing
- eating
- being with a friend
- listening to music
- outside time
- movement
- favourite toy

Emotion visual cards (happy, calm, excited, tired) (found in PDF resource)

AAC devices with core words (happy, like, feel, more, play, yes/no)

Setup

1. Print and cut out a set of happy activity picture cards and emotion visual cards, one set per player.
2. Students sit in a circle or at tables with clear access to both sets of picture cards (happy activities and emotion visuals).
3. Present 4 - 6 picture prompts representing everyday happy moments.
4. Present the emotion visual cards and explain each one.
5. Ensure AAC devices are open to feelings and favourite activities.

Gameplay

1. Introduce the Idea

Teacher says in simple language:

"Today we will think about something that made us feel happy."

Show the "happy" visual to anchor meaning.

We will then try to match the activity that makes us feel happy to an emotion we might feel when we do the happy activity.



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2. Choose a Happy Moment

Students select a happy moment by:

- pointing to a happy activity picture card
- looking at the card
- vocalising when shown options of the different happy activity picture cards
- selecting on AAC
- choosing a real object (ball, toy, book), that relates to the happy activity picture cards

Teacher narrates each choice:

“You felt happy when you played.”

“You felt happy at lunchtime.”

“You felt happy with your friend.”

3. Record the Happy Moment

The students identify what happy activity they like to do, to do this students draw on the card, scribble on it, colour it in, pick it up to show the teacher or paste the picture card onto their page. Any mark-making counts as participation.

Optional sentence stems (adult reads aloud):

“I’m happy when ____.”

“I like to do ____.”

4. Reflect on the Feeling

For each happy activity picture card the student selects, encourage them to try and match an emotion that they feel when they do their chosen happy activity.

They do this by:

- pointing to an emotion card
- picking up a emotion card or sticking it onto their page next to their happy activity picture card
- showing their own face/expression of the emotion
- using AAC to say “happy,” “good,” or “like”

Teacher models:

“Thinking about your happy moment makes you feel ____.”



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5. Plan for Tomorrow

Teacher asks:

“What is something you want to do tomorrow that will make you happy?”

Students choose from visuals or AAC:

- play
- friend
- outside
- toy
- music
- rest

Teacher adds this to the notebook page (“Tomorrow I want to...”).

6. Celebrate

Each student’s participation is celebrated with:



- claps
- thumbs up
- smiles
- “Great choosing!”
- “I love your happy thought!”

Sharing is optional and supported.

Debrief / Reflection

Use one simple question at a time with visuals:

- “Point to your happy moment.”
- “How do you feel now?”
- “Show me happy!”
- “What will make you happy tomorrow?”

Accept any response, eye gaze, vocalisation, body movement, AAC, gesture.

Sensory-Seeking Learners Variation

1. Use Sensory Anchors



Pair each happy activity with a tactile object:

- play → small ball
- music → shaker
- friend → heart texture
- outside → leaf
- rest → soft fabric

Students select by touching objects instead of pictures.



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2. Add Movement Before Recording

Short movement bursts help regulate and support attention:

- wiggle
- stretch
- clap
- stomp
- deep-pressure squeeze with cushion

3. Sensory-Based “Happy” Expression

Students show their happy feeling through movement:

- big stretch
- wiggle dance
- arms up
- tapping rhythm

..... This substitutes or supplements drawing.

4. Calming Options

If overwhelmed, offer:

- weighted item
- quiet corner
- slow breathing with visual cue
- soft music

Then rejoin the task.

AAC-Specific Supports

1. Prepare AAC Vocabulary

Include:

- happy, excited, joy, smile, laugh, fun etc
- like
- play
- friend
- today
- tomorrow
- more
- good
- yes/no
- feel



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2. Aided Language Input

Teachers model AAC while speaking:

“Happy.”
“I like this.”
“Today I’m happy.”
“Tomorrow I’ll play...”

3. AAC for Choosing Happy Moments

Students select using:

- touch
- eye gaze
- single-switch
- partner-assisted scanning

4. AAC Reflection

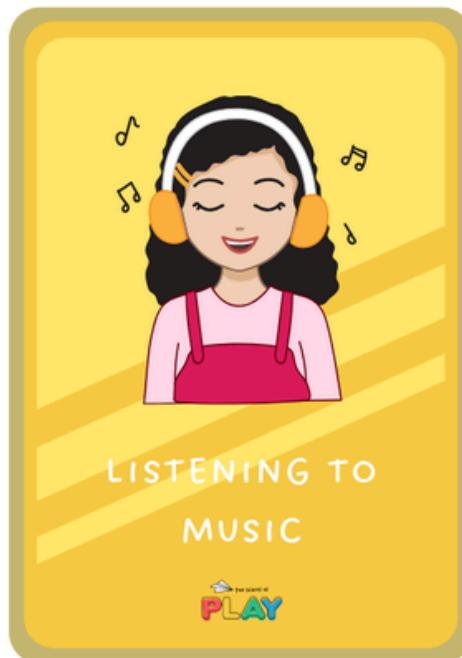
Use AAC to support the closing questions:

- “Happy?” “yes or no”
- “Do you want to be happy tomorrow?” “yes” or “no”

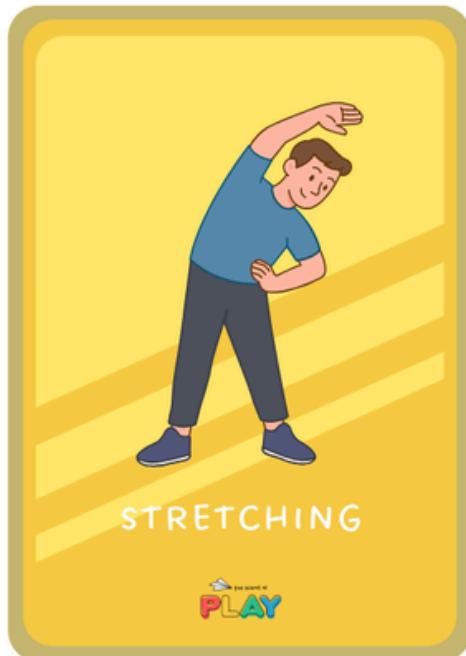


ACTIVITY PICTURE CARDS

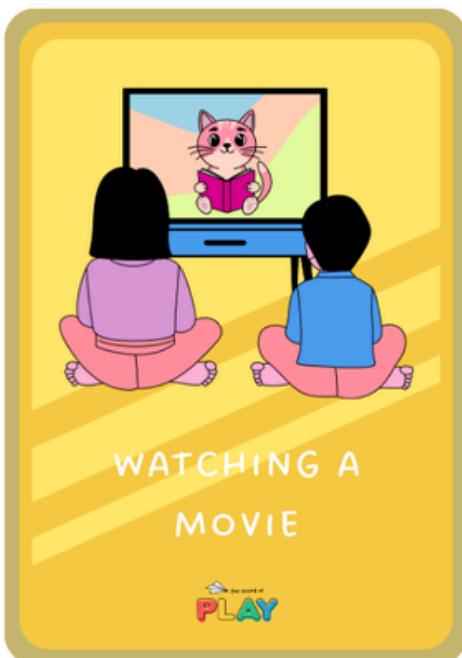
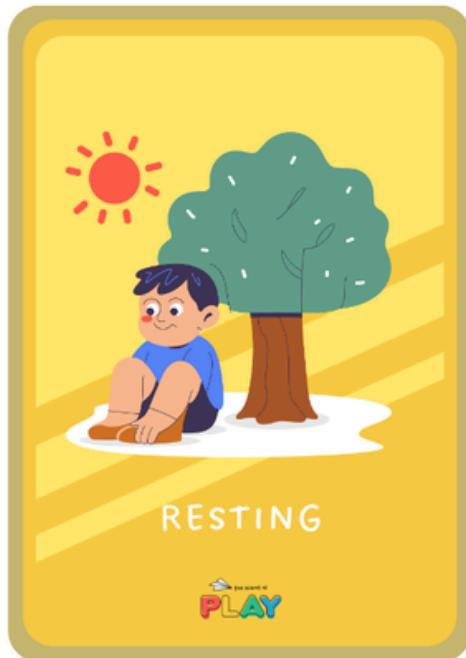
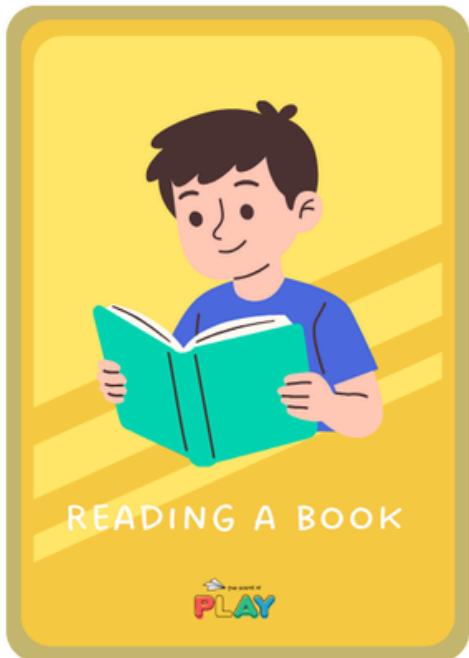
PRINT AND CUT OUT BOTH SETS OF CARDS. STUDENTS CHOOSE ONE HAPPY ACTIVITY CARD AND ONE EMOTION CARD, THEN GLUE, POINT TO, OR SHOW THEM IN THEIR NOTEBOOK TO SHARE A HAPPY THOUGHT FROM TODAY OR ONE THEY WANT FOR TOMORROW. ANY RESPONSE COUNTS (POINTING, EYE GAZE, DRAWING, OR AAC.)



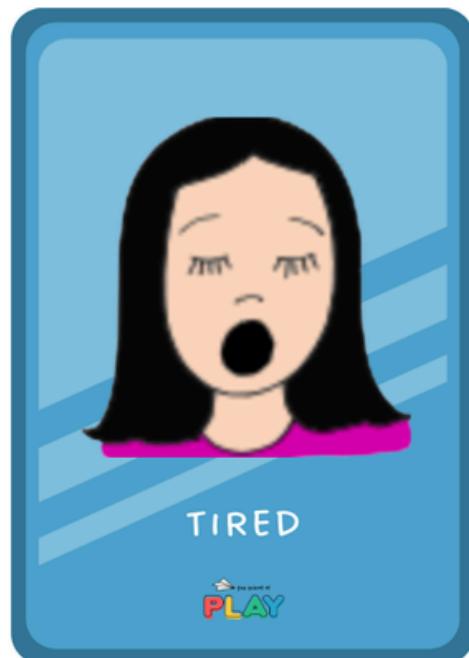
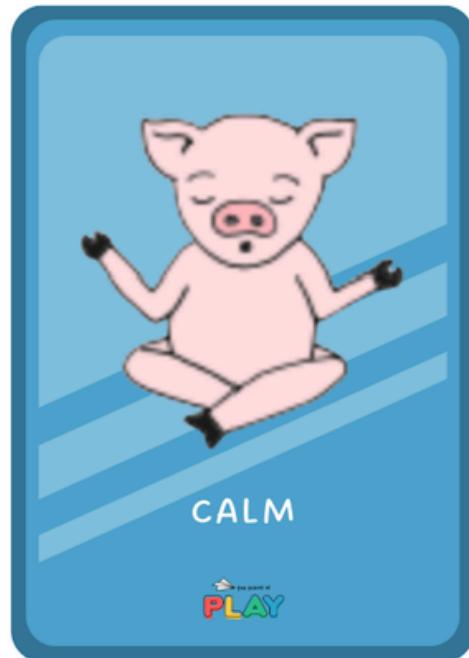
ACTIVITY PICTURE CARDS



ACTIVITY PICTURE CARDS



EMOTION VISUAL CARDS



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