
TEACH HAPPY

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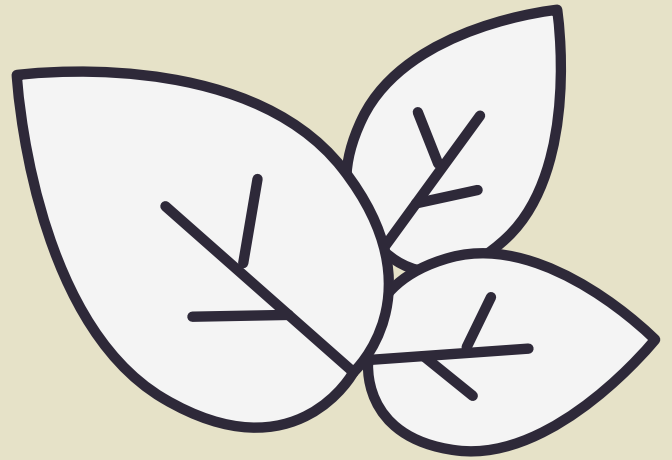
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OVERVIEW

Teach Happy by Lisa Canova discusses the importance of teacher and student wellness. The author argues that by prioritizing personal well-being, teachers will have the capacity to put the best versions of themselves in front of their students. As a result, students will have greater academic and personal success. Canova draws on personal experiences from her work as a classroom teacher. She speaks honestly and openly about the struggles, triumphs, and learning experiences she experienced when working with students. Through her book, she encourages teachers to find health and happiness in their work and create classroom communities where students feel inspired to do the same.



"The quality of a teacher's health and wellness determines how joyful, curious, creative, and productive their classroom has the potential to become" (Canova, 2017, p. 9)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lisa Canova



Lisa Canova is a former elementary and special education teacher, talented and gifted coordinator for elementary and middle level students, and private life coach for teens and parents. She has a master's degree in literacy and has co-authored numerous articles focusing on the incorporation of social and emotional wellness teaching through literature.

Teach Happy was inspired by Lisa's personal experiences within public education. When Lisa was a teacher, she struggled with personal wellness and teacher burnout. She witnessed firsthand the power of prioritizing her well-being and the impact that it had on her students learning. She developed a personal "wellness recipe" which included collaboration with colleagues, taking risks, and experimenting with innovative teaching approaches. Her personal wellness allowed her to be a better teacher and it had a direct impact on her student's success. Teach Happy was written to inspire other educators in an effort to help teachers, just like herself, be happy and well.

Section 1: Begin Making the Connection

Build Human Connection Between Student and Teacher

- Establish Respect
- Practice What You Preach
- Listen and Observe
- Create a Safe Zone in the Classroom

"[Kids] learn better from those teachers who create a classroom community where students feel cared for and loved"

(CANOVA, 2017, P.18)



"Playground observation is a powerful tool to help teachers understand the social and emotional wellness needs of their students" (Canova, 2017, p. 33)

Section 2: Finding Teacher Wellness

"The purpose of teacher wellness is to maintain your energy and protect it in order to put your best self in front of students and colleagues"

(CANOVA, 2017, P. 44)



Tips for Teacher Wellness

- Move Schools Every 5 Years
- Exercise the "Voice" Muscle: Your Voice Counts
- Believe You Are in Control of Your Classroom
- Trust Your Intuition
- Use Meditation to Enhance Mindfulness
- Avoid Negative Spaces, Find Positive Places
- Write to Feel Right: Keep a Journal
- Find Your Peeps
- Start a Righteous Revolution
- Be Kind to Support Staff

Remember:

Some things are out of our control. However, we do have control over how we approach situations.

Section 3: Creating an Effective Teaching Environment



"For content to be meaningful to students, teachers must explain why and how the content applies to real life"

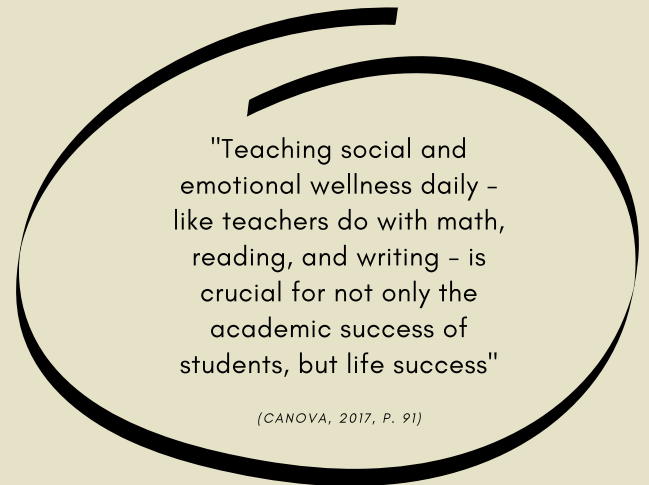
(CANOVA, 2017, P. 67)

Mindful Classroom Management Tips

- Do not punish the entire class
- Develop positive consequences
- Pay attention to the mirror and ripple effect
- Avoid referring students for disciplinary action
- Embrace the challenge
- Shift your attention to the positive

Make Learning Useful and Entertaining

"Up to this point, I had been a teacher who controlled the classroom. But I began to see that my students needed to be confident asking questions themselves and that I did not always have to provide an answer to everything. It was okay to leave some questions unanswered and inspire students to keep questioning and discovering answers for themselves. Rather than teaching them there was one right answer, I stopped looking for something specific from my students and allowed them to stay open to possibilities" (Canova, 2017, p. 68-69)



"Teaching social and emotional wellness daily - like teachers do with math, reading, and writing - is crucial for not only the academic success of students, but life success"

(CANOVA, 2017, P. 91)

Take a Stand Against Standardized Testing

- Get parents, community members, and students to rethink options around testing
- Demand better ways to assess and promote student learning
- Protest harmful uses of standardized exams
- Don't teach to the test
- Find quality options for students who opt-out of testing

Section 4: Teaching that Promotes Student Wellness

"When it comes to labeling students, teacher bias has the potential to cause great harm and drastically alter the path of student outcomes in school. It is therefore important for educators to be aware of the effects of labeling on students and how a label given, whether accurate or not, can alter the trajectory of a student being successful academically and socially well-adjusted.

(CANOVA, 2017, P. 100-101)

Teach Self-Esteem for Academic and Life Success

- Make students feel important in class
- Be interested and ask students questions
- Celebrate success
- Help students see evidence of their progress
- Teach that failure is part of learning
- Establish the classroom as a safe zone
- Model respect and kindness
- Use literature to teach about being human

Wellness Without the Labels



There are a variety of reasons that could explain student behaviours. Mislabeling students leads to incorrect diagnoses and over-medication in our children.

- Roles and behaviour expectations of children has shifted throughout history and varies dramatically across different societies in the current world
- The way in which children develop and mature varies drastically
- There might be fewer diagnoses if there was smaller class sizes and more physical education built into the day
- Society has narrowed the vision of what "normal" child behaviour is
- A diagnosis often leads to more educational support but doesn't consider the long term effects
- It is easy to give a diagnosis but very hard to erase it

Section 5: Necessary Practice: Social-Emotional Learning

"Reading material that inspires kids to be brave and realize they are not alone in the challenges they face is more effective and meaningful than once upon a time"

(CANOVA, 2017, P. 140)

Power in Literature

- Teaches kids how to handle tough situations
- Inspires kids to be brave
- Teaches them it's okay to share difficult feelings, experiences, and desires
- Inspire students to become social activists
- Find hope and comfort knowing they aren't alone



"Through literary experiences, teachers can offer a safe place to hold discussions and explore serious issues of racism, abuse, drug addiction, depression, divorce, and topics of sexuality requiring understanding and compassion. By teaching from a place of respect and high expectations, children rise to the occasion" (Canova, 2017, p. 145-156)

CONNECTION TO

practice

Teach Happy highlights many important points for educators. As an educator myself, this book has a direct connection to my current professional life. The book discusses the importance of teacher wellness and how that impacts students wellness. The author also stresses the importance of building strong student-teacher relationships, teaching empathy and understanding to students, and touches on the sensitive topic of over-diagnosing and over-medicating our children. The contents of the book would be relevant and meaningful to any individual who works with children in an educational setting.

Discussion Questions and Critical Analysis



- In your experience, do you feel teacher wellness is prioritized and/or encouraged? In what capacity?
- What is the role of leadership in teacher well-being? How can leaders support their staff?
- What are the consequences of not prioritizing and supporting teacher well-being?
- What are the steps to take if personal wellness is not prioritized by administration?

Teach Happy is a heartwarming book that is full of real-life experiences of the author's work with children. If anyone has ever had the chance to work with students in some capacity, they will have experienced how connected they become to your heart. Teachers become invested in their student's lives and genuinely care about their well-being. This book reflects just that and the author provides practical strategies for supporting teacher and student wellness.

I chose this book because after reading the description, I expected it to be equally focused on both teacher and student well-being. As I reflect on the contents of the book, there was minimal content on teacher wellness and the majority of the book was focused on how to cultivate student wellness in the classroom. Although the information provided on student well-being is important and useful for educators, providing the reader with more information on how to prioritize and cultivate personal wellness, would have strengthened the contents of the book. If the two concepts are as closely related as the author implies, then focusing on teacher well-being throughout the book would have strengthened the content.

Overall, *Teach Happy* was a well-organized and practical piece of literature. I would encourage any individual who works with children in an educational setting to read this book. It is a quality read for both new and experienced teachers and I would recommend it to a colleague.