HAPPY SCHOOL 365

Action Jackson's Guide to Motivating Learners

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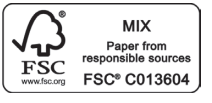
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Action Jackson

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Introduction

I recently heard a beautiful quote that sums up the need for this book. It said: 'Every child is a different kind of flower and all together make this world a beautiful garden.' This quote gives me a vivid picture of how we should see the next generation. Young people are all unique and they all come to this planet with a unique purpose. If we can nurture them on the right path, we will begin to see a shift in our society. We owe them that!

However, when it comes to the environment in which our kids are growing up, we are faced with a dilemma. Parents and teachers are finding it increasingly difficult to help the next generation to grow up in a world that's changing at a rapid pace. We are living at a time of accelerated change, overwhelming complexity and tremendous competition. We are seeing political unrest and social and emotional issues, and our kids are in the middle of this mess, trying to fight their way to freedom. They are pulled in all directions, by friends, teachers, their own insecurities, social media, technology and more. They spend so much time looking outside of themselves for answers that they fail to look within for their latent potential. Many young people are increasingly fearful of the present and anxious for the future. Students are plagued with the fear of failing and, worse, there

is a high rate of suicide amongst teens, anxiety about self-image and apathy towards the future.

I often hear adults complain about 'these kids nowadays', but are we not responsible for helping them to navigate through life? Is it not our responsibility to educate and empower young people to unlock their potential? Could it be our fault that some kids in this generation are unsure of themselves?

Happy School 365 aims to be the solution to the lack of effective guidance for young people in terms of their identity, purpose and vision. It is a DIY guide for a new way forward for teachers working in primary and secondary schools, to help them create a learning environment where young people can be happy, healthy and motivated to reach their potential both academically and personally. This is not another book for the shelf but one for daily use, providing tried-and-tested methods that can be easily applied by any teacher to help unlock a young person's motivation to achieve success. The ideas will help young people make the most of school and life, build better relationships with teachers, manage workload effectively, concentrate on revision, get clarity on how to make better life choices, be more disciplined and focused, develop healthy relationships and build a sense of self-worth.

What will I find in each chapter?

The chapters that follow will take you on a journey from manifesto to mission, mindset, method and finally miracle, with the ultimate goal of helping you to motivate young people so they grow up happy and fulfilled.

Chapter 1 sets out a **manifesto** for why it's so important to create a happy school full of motivated learners and maintain this for 365 days of the year. It provides a model for what a happy school looks like, advice on overcoming the barriers to achieving a happy school and an explanation of the process the book will take to help you accomplish this for your own setting.

Chapter 2 digs deeper into our **mission** to develop motivated learners. It considers what motivation looks like for young people, providing a five-question framework that you can use to help them find their 'big why'. The chapter also explores the six needs that

all humans have and provides practical guidance that will help you to use these needs to keep students motivated in your happy school. Throughout this chapter, you will also find motivation tips, highlighted in boxes. These are simple, actionable ideas that you can complete with your learners to put the theories into practice. The tips will help you to have an immediate impact on young people.

Chapter 3 examines the **mindset** that teachers need to cultivate within themselves if they are to achieve this mission. There are three mindsets that need to be adopted by any adult who is serious about impacting the next generation: the teacher mindset, the nurturer mindset and the coach mindset. Again, look out for the motivation tips highlighted throughout this chapter to help you action the advice.

Chapter 4 is the *Happy School 365* **method** for motivating students. It includes 21 practical ideas that are doable, fun tasks that will have high impact on a young person. This section of the book will help you to get instant results in developing happy, healthy learners who are motivated to achieve their potential. The ideas are suitable for use with a whole class of learners or in small-group sessions, or even in one-to-one mentoring and support. Each idea begins with a short summary to help you dip in and out to find the strategies you need, and concludes with a motivation tip to help you put the strategy into practice.

Chapter 5 invites you to visualise the **miracle** – the broader impact of our work to create happy schools. Everything we do leaves a legacy. Our dream of a happy school is simply for one reason. That is to create a world where young people can wake up happy and go to bed fulfilled. To create a world where confidence is readily available in the lives of our kids. The impact this will have is remarkable.

Visit www.happyschool365.co.uk to download your free *Happy School 365* videos that accompany this book.

If you are on social media, pop over to Twitter @ActionJackson to say hello and let me know how this book is helping you. Use the hashtag #HappySchool365.

Chapter 1

The happy school manifesto

'A happy school creates happy kids. Happy kids become happy adults. Happy adults create a happy world.'

Action Jackson, UK Ambassador for Happiness

Why do we need happy schools?

When I was at school, I wouldn't say I was sad but I wasn't super happy either. It was a journey and you just had to get on with it. We conquered the challenges and sometimes they conquered us, but we moved on. The reason why I decided to write this book was simply because I believe that we are now living in a time when happiness has become a scarcity. Many people aren't as happy as they're supposed to be and young people especially so. I am inspired by Whitney Houston's song 'Greatest Love of All' when I say that I believe children are our future. If they aren't happy, our future world won't be a happy place either. We must teach them well, show them the beauty they have inside, make them feel proud of themselves, let them laugh and let them lead the way.

However, the sad reality is that our young people aren't laughing as much as they should be laughing. They don't feel as proud as they should be feeling. And they aren't leading as they should be leading. That's why I have made it my mission to create a world where every young person wakes up happy and goes to bed fulfilled. I've made it my duty to spread happiness wherever I can, to whomever I can.

So, what gives me the right to spread happiness? Well, I am a motivational speaker and a life coach, focusing specifically on spreading happiness in education. Over the past 20 years, with my team at Fix Up Seminars, I have visited hundreds of schools, both in the UK and internationally, to motivate and empower students and teachers. We provide workshops, assemblies and online resources that are fun, creative and inspirational and that aim to help young people achieve a better quality of life. I am also grateful that I have had the opportunity to be surrounded by happy people who have embedded a happy mindset in me, which has allowed me to achieve great things in life. I truly believe that my mission on this planet is to bring life where there is not life, laughter where there is sadness, and freedom where there is fear. I don't want to look back over my life, decades from now, and know that I didn't do my part to help others feel happy. Wherever I am, whether on a bus, a train or a plane, I have to make someone smile. If I'm in a classroom or in the boardroom, I have to make someone smile. I have to make someone feel like life is amazing.

> **My mission on this planet is to bring life where there is not life, laughter where there is sadness, and freedom where there is fear.**

And I want to help every teacher to do this too. Teachers are the most amazing people on the planet. I asked my followers on Twitter to tweet the name of a teacher who had inspired them. I received the names of over 100 people my followers wanted to celebrate. That really goes to show the power and the impact of a teacher. I want to show teachers how they can harness this power to unlock happiness and fulfilment in every student who passes through their classroom. I believe there is a key to happiness and if we work together to establish this, it's the start of something great.

What is happiness?

I remember standing on stage in a school, ready to inspire some young people. I greeted the crowd with my big, smiley face and I delivered my seminar on dreaming big. I gave motivational quotes; I entertained. They laughed, joined in, and some of them even cried. At the end I took some questions. One of the students raised her hand and asked me, 'Sir, why are you so happy?' I paused for a moment and then I thought to myself, 'Well, I'm happy because I'm grateful for life. I'm grateful that I'm alive. I'm grateful that I have this opportunity to do what I do on a regular basis. I might not have everything I want, but I've got everything I need.' What do I need? I need me to be alive, and if I'm alive, I can achieve and do anything. I can be, do or have anything in life.

So, you see, happiness is a goal that can be achieved with the right perspective. But unfortunately, humans have made finding happiness a grand quest. This quest has us doing all sorts. It's the reason why we dash from work to home and from home to work. Why we seek out relationships. Why we buy that big car. Why we go to certain restaurants to eat. Why we buy certain clothes. Why we go and watch certain movies by certain actors. Why we go on holiday to certain destinations. We are all on this quest for happiness on a day-to-day basis. Sometimes it works! We do a certain thing and it makes us feel happy. Other times, it doesn't and we can be left feeling worse.

I am reminded about a quote that says: 'There is no way to happiness because happiness is the way.' Happiness is not a destination. Happiness is a journey in itself. It is a state of being. There is nothing else that is going to lead you to happiness. Most people in life are searching for things to bring them happiness and fail to realise that happiness is a choice that you make.

What does this mean for schools?

In schools, happiness must come first. We can't get results out of our young people unless they feel happy about themselves. This is why happiness and motivation are intrinsically linked. The tools, tips and strategies that I use to motivate young people work because they help young people to feel happy. My aim is to equip teachers, educators and anyone else working with young people with these tools too.

You see, there's no reason I have to plead the case as to why we need happy schools. It speaks for itself. School should be a place where we nurture, grow and impact the next generation. Schools should be a birthplace of world changers; a place where we raise leaders. But the problem is that schools have become a place where many young people lose their identity. They lose their sense of direction and their sense of purpose. That is why it is imperative for us to work together, to make sure that our kids come out of the school system whole and ready to take on the world.

I recently did a poll on Instagram asking young people the following question: 'Do you think school makes kids happy?' Sadly, 72 per cent of the kids who replied said no, school doesn't make kids happy. This is a tragic reality. A place where young people will spend a large chunk of their childhood is not making them feel happy. Shouldn't our kids have a better perspective about school? Shouldn't they have a different attitude towards learning? We, as adults, must be asking why children have this perspective about education and what we can do to change it. You see, my quest in life is to create a world where every young person wakes up happy and goes to bed fulfilled. In order to have that, we must first start in school, because a happy world starts with a happy school.

> **A happy world starts with a happy school.**

The happy school model

When I visit schools, I am often met with a great big poster of the school values, hanging beautifully in the corridor; values that mean something powerful. The issue is that often only the leadership team knows the values. Some teachers can recite them but the kids are unaware of them. School values should not only be on display along the corridors of our schools, but also on the walls of our hearts. Our values are what we live and breathe, not something we memorise. So, what does your school stand for and how often do you see it played out in the lives of the young people you teach? A school motto should be simple to act on and simple to remember.

In a happy school, a simple strapline that makes sense and can be carried out is:

'Be happy.
Spread happiness.'

To make sure this motto is lived by every member of the school community, a happy school needs a 'Happiness Manifesto'. This manifesto should help everyone to nurture one another towards happiness in three key areas:

- Head: What we think.
- Heart: What we feel.
- Hand: What we do.

Let's look at each in more detail.

1. **Head:** What we think.

   Everything we do is motivated by our mindset and our mindset is formed by our thoughts. If we slowly change the way we think, we have won half the battle. A school that wants to establish happiness as the core part of its ethos will have to adopt the positive thinking mindset. This requires the 'understand before you can be understood' approach. It's a stance of empathy.

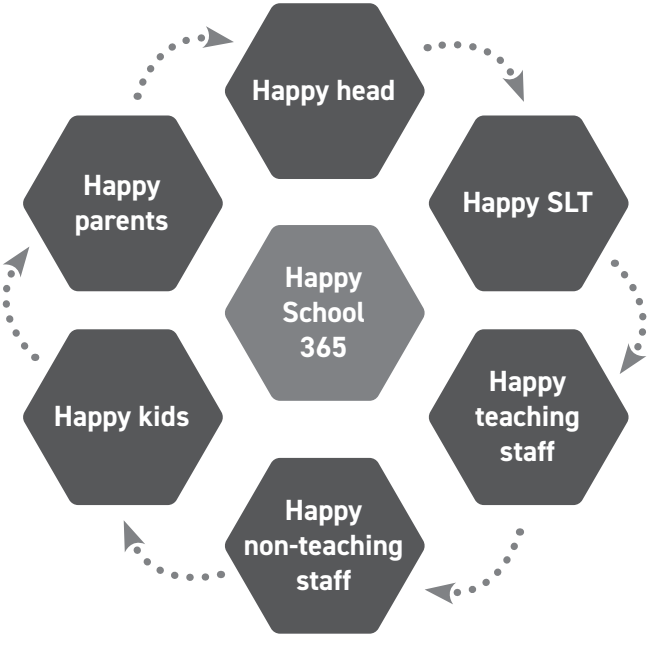
2. Heart: What we feel.

Our emotions are a powerful way to check in on how we are feeling. The aim of any school that wants happiness at its core should be to make sure that their kids and staff *feel* happy. This can be done by asking a simple question on a regular basis: 'How happy are you feeling on a scale of one to ten?'

3. Hand: What we do.

Actions speak louder than words. This phase is about what we *do* within school to show empathy with others in order to increase happiness. A school community should have a set of practical actions that they engage in weekly, monthly and termly to bring happiness. This should be measurable. For example, how many happy notes were shared in a term?

A happy school requires everyone to be on board with the Happiness Manifesto in order for it to work. If some parts of the happy school model are unhappy, it can have a negative effect on the impact that can be made. We are only as strong as the weakest link. Here are the key components that need attention in a happy school model.



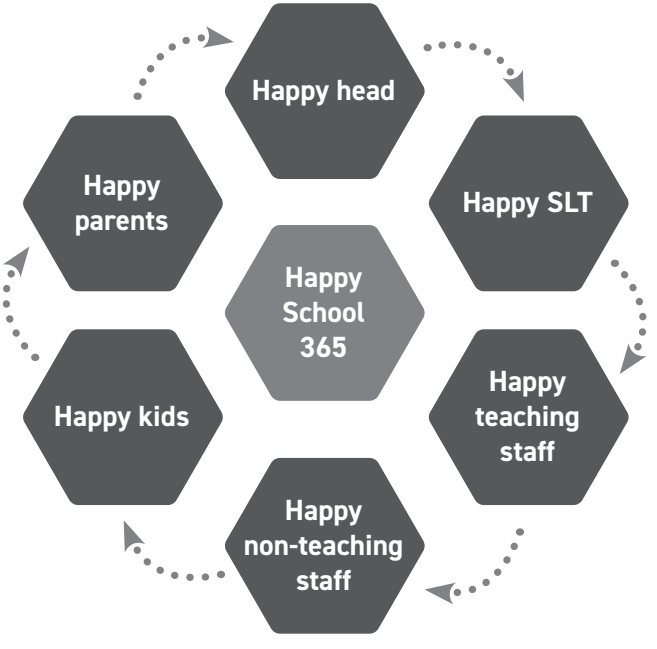
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The *Happy School 365* model:

1. a happy head
2. a happy senior leadership team
3. happy teaching staff
4. happy non-teaching staff
5. happy kids
6. happy parents.

A happy head

Everything starts from the head. Without the head, you are left with a body that has no direction. The head carries the vision and works to ensure that the whole school is on the same page. Now, if the head is unhappy and unable to enrol everyone else on the journey, you automatically have division. I understand that not everyone will see things the same way as the leader, but that's where empathy comes into it. The key thing is to make sure the head is happy and healthy. If you're a headteacher, you must take responsibility for your own happiness. The key to being a happy head is found in surrounding yourself with other heads and being transparent about any challenges you might be facing. There are many headteacher masterminds you can connect with online. Another thing that's crucial is certainty in your own identity and vision. You are in the headship position for a reason; never let anything or another make you feel that you don't belong there. A clear picture of where you are taking the school is essential. A combination of these two factors, identity and vision, will make for a happy head.

A happy senior leadership team

If the school has a happy head, this should help with the formation of a happy senior leadership team. It goes without saying that a successful team is essential for success in any endeavour. To create an effective team, you must have the mindset for empathy and the willingness to accept people's differences. There are three phases to achieving this: 1) come together; 2) stay together; 3) work together.

Stage one is the easiest; it's the basic level of teamwork. The second stage, staying together, is crucial because if there is no rapport or harmony within the team, it's hard to stay together, and the only factors that will keep a team together are common values and a shared desire to achieve the vision. The third level is working

together effectively. We can come together and stay together, but if we don't work together, we cannot be effective. No one is an island; we need to pull all our resources together to achieve the goal of a happy school.

Happy teaching staff

The next part of the happy school model is the teaching staff. They play a crucial role in shaping the minds of our young people. The more effective they are at their job, the better the impact on their students. A happy teacher is one of the keys to a happy student. To obtain happy teachers there has to be an equal balance between love and challenge, whereby managers care enough for the wellbeing of the teachers and also challenge them enough to help them grow into the effective educators they want to be. To achieve this, there must be consistent communication between senior leaders and teachers and also the freedom for teachers to express their creativity in their class. Like the kids, teachers too have human needs that need to be met. If these needs are met, you will find that no matter how tough things get, teachers will commit to the outcome. If you're a manager, you are responsible for nurturing your staff in this way. If you're a teacher, accept this guidance from your managers, and if it's not forthcoming, seek out a mentor or peers who can help instead.

Happy non-teaching staff

The happiness of non-teaching staff is also an essential piece of the puzzle. The amazing thing about non-teaching staff is the impact they have on the school process as a whole. Just because they are in the background making things happen, they are often forgotten about and not appreciated as much in certain schools. But without them the infrastructure would collapse. The key to nurturing non-teaching staff is frequent appreciation for the job they do. Non-teaching staff have a different perspective on what is happening across the school. They are part of the team as much as anybody else. Encouraging your students to appreciate them when possible would be a great way to boost their level of happiness and belonging. When we take away the labels, we are left with 'human'. By honouring who we are at the core, we create an environment of joy.

Chapter 4
The method

Our mission has been defined. We have explored the mindsets you need to achieve that mission and how to attain them. Now, you are ready for the next step: the *Happy School 365* method for motivating students. This method comprises 21 ideas, each of which is a practical, entertaining activity that you can complete with your students. The ideas are designed to have high impact on a young person, to help them to find their why, draw motivation from the six human needs and set them on a path to fulfilment and happiness. They are suitable for use as whole-class activities, whether that's within your subject lessons or form time. Alternatively, they can be used when supporting small groups of students or even one on one. However you use them, I hope they will help you to motivate and inspire the young people in your care.

Idea 2: Kill the monster

Help your students to get bad habits under control before they become entrenched and have a significant impact on their future.



A very long time ago, I heard the phrase: 'Kill the monster while it's still a baby' and it really made me think. You see, babies look cute and monster babies are no different. But eventually this monster baby will grow up to destroy you and you don't even realise it.

Working with young people, you will find they have certain bad habits that might seem small, insignificant, cute even, but if these habits aren't nipped in the bud and destroyed now, they are going to grow, and when it's time to get rid of them, it's going to be too late. The question is: what are some of the bad habits that we've allowed our young people to get away with?

There are things as simple as saying please and thank you, being on time or being focused. If you nip those monsters in the bud and kill them while they're still babies, the kids will be more equipped for the real world up ahead. Show me your habits and I'll show you your future! You don't decide your future; you decide your habits and your habits decide your future.

> **"You don't decide your future; you decide your habits and your habits decide your future.**

So, you need to start controlling the habits of young people in your care right now because habits are all we are! We are a combination of our good habits and our bad habits. Personally, I've created an obsession with being early because someone once said to me that the management of your time determines your financial future. They meant that when you manage your time well, you create impact; if

you create impact, you'll make a good income one day. So, when I was younger, I said to myself, 'You know what, it's honourable to be early.' When you're early, you're chilled, you're focused and you're ready.

Nipping bad habits in the bud

So, what are the bad habits you're seeing among the kids in your care and how can you help them to nip them in the bud while these habits are still babies and not entrenched in their adult lives? For me, I recently came off of a 21-day detox. My body's feeling good, I dropped about 10 kg in weight and I'm feeling lighter and more focused, which is great. But to get to this point, I had to ask myself, 'How did I get to the stage where I needed to do a detox?' Well, I was always eating without even thinking. This was a small but bad habit.

Ask your students to identify for themselves the small bad habits that they have which they need to kill now before they become a much bigger issue. If they struggle, guide them gently towards the bad habits that you've observed in them!

Once identified, get the students to visualise the impact of these habits in:

- three months
- six months
- one year
- five years
- 20 years.

Now, what would happen if they nipped these habits in the bud right now, today? Get the students to imagine how different the future might look without these habits. What could they achieve in:

- three months
- six months
- one year
- five years
- 20 years?

Younger learners could draw five pictures of themselves to show what they could achieve within each of these timeframes if they were to nip their bad habit in the bud. Older learners could write down their thoughts or simply reflect on this in their own time.

It might be helpful for the learners to link the bad habit with an academic or personal goal. What impact might the bad habit have on their journey to achieving this? How would nipping the bad habit in the bud help them to achieve it more quickly and successfully?

Hopefully the students will be able to visualise how working on making a small change now will pay dividends in the months and years to come. This activity will motivate young people to kill the bad habits in their lives before it's too late.



Motivation tip:

Show the students that you're doing the same activity in your own life! Tell the students about the bad habits in your life and how you're going to nip them in the bud before they become a major problem. That way, you'll become a great example for the next generation to follow.

Idea 4: Embrace negativity

Most people tell you to seek out positive people and surround yourself with them in your life. I'm going to tell you the exact opposite: seek out the negative people! Bear with me. Let me explain.



I love negative people. You might think that's a bit of a strange thing to say, but here's the thing: there is no growth in comfort.

Being a positive person, I have realised that the best time for me to activate my power is when I am facing a negative person. I don't need to be positive when I am around positive people, but I do need to be positive when I'm around negative people. Why? Well, there is a battle between light and darkness and often darkness will win. This is why I love negative people; they allow me to build my positive muscles.

Every time I face a negative person, I hit them with positivity. The more I'm pushing back, the stronger I'm getting. The reason why most people fail is because they want it easy, but I don't want it easy. You see, every time I fail, every time I am criticised, I am given the strength to be able to respond with positivity, and every time I repeat my positivity, I reinforce my positivity. And that's what it's all about.

I love negative people because they allow me to grow. When you go to the gym, you don't pick the light weights, you pick the heavy weights, because they build the muscle! So, every time you are around negative people, don't complain about them; just be consistently positive and eventually they'll cave in. Right now, you're caving in to their negativity. If you know full well that when they approach you they're going to be negative, you need to be preparing

yourself to be positive! Positively prepared. If you know what they're going to say, know what response you are going to give. Eventually, if you keep doing this, you will win!

> **Every time you are around negative people, don't complain about them; just be consistently positive and eventually they'll cave in.**

Challenge your students to do this. Tell them to seek out the negative people in their friendship circles so they can practise their positivity. They'll most likely know what their friends are going to be moaning about when they see them at break, so they can prepare how they are going to respond to them and what they're going to say to channel positivity. Their challenge is to make their friends cave in to this positivity. This exercise will not only make your students happier, stronger and more motivated, but it will help them to spread this feeling of joy around the school too.

Of course, this isn't an easy thing to do but that's why it's so powerful. There is no comfort in growth. Growth hurts. Everybody wants to see a rainbow, but there is no rainbow without rain. There's no joy without pain. Embracing the negative people in their lives will actually make young people stronger. Sometimes you need your polar opposite to create passion. There is no Batman without the Joker.

Motivation tip:

To help students to monitor and therefore improve their responses to negative people, give them each a reaction score card. On the card, allow space for the students to complete the following:

Event: What happened?

Response: What did you say or do? What rating would you give your responses? 5 is 'very good'; 1 is 'very bad'.

Outcome: What were the results after your response? How would you rate the outcome? 5 is 'positive outcome'; 1 is 'poor outcome'.