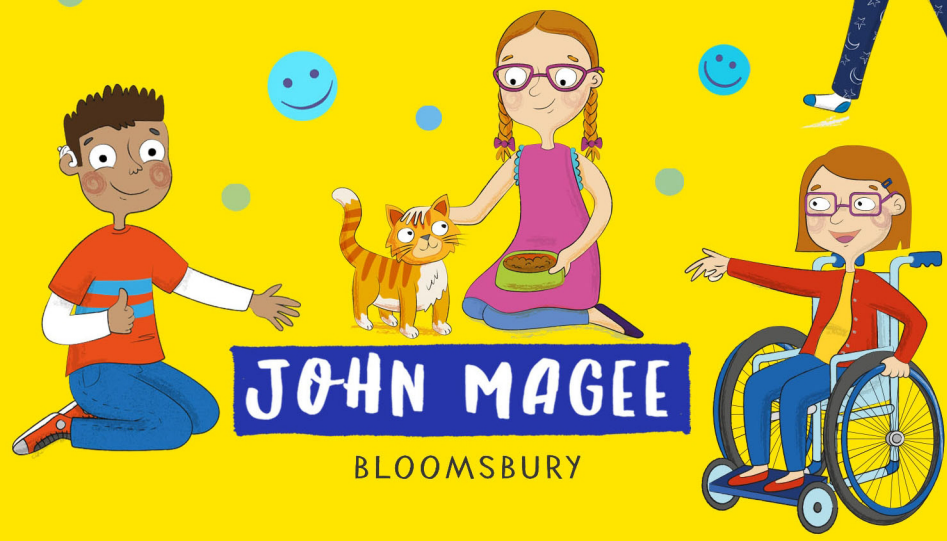
'A great way to help children consider practical tools to improve their mood when they're feeling low.'
Tom Percival

# THE HAPPY TANK

FILL YOUR LIFE WITH HAPPY HABITS



JOHN MAGEE

BLOOMSBURY

# THE HAPPY TANK

# PRAISE FOR THE HAPPY TANK

## PUPILS' FEEDBACK

### Briony – Year 6

In the morning when I practise filling my Happy Tank if I am ever feeling sad, I know that two minutes on each level of *The Happy Tank* can make me feel happier. I have noticed other Kind Kids see how happy and confident I am.

### Johnny – Year 6

I like *The Happy Tank* because when I wake up early it gets me ready for the day and I have noticed when I get to school, I pay more attention to the teacher and I feel relaxed and calm.

### Abi – Year 9

Since practising the exercises in *The Happy Tank* in the morning, I feel less upset and depressed, happier and more self-confident. The book has helped my mental health. I also have more friends now because I am happier in myself. It really does work, you just have to do what it says, which is easy peasy lemon squeezy, and to practise, practise, practise.



### Tori – Year 9

What I have learnt from practising the exercises in *The Happy Tank* is to not take life too seriously and to have fun whilst learning new things. It has shown me that we can always make time to take care of our own wellbeing.

### Scott – Year 6

*The Happy Tank* will help other pupils because it makes you think happier thoughts. It helps me reflect on my choices and I believe it will help other children too.

### Mackenzie – Year 6

It can help other children by helping them calm down and not be as angry or sad. It keeps them in a good state of mind. I like the way it helps me calm down.

### Sophie – Year 6

It helped me with my anger, I tend to get angry very easily and it has helped me calm down and not have as many behaviour incidents inside and outside of the classroom. I would say if you have a short temper, practise the exercises in *The Happy Tank* and it will help you have less anger.

### Zara – Year 6

It has made me feel happier throughout the day. I used to get moody a lot throughout the day, but now I don't as much. I think it can help other children feel calmer.

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# THE HAPPY TANK

***Fill your life with happy habits***



JOHN MAGEE

BLOOMSBURY EDUCATION
LONDON OXFORD NEW YORK NEW DELHI SYDNEY

*This book is dedicated to Chris Lickiss, National Leader of Education and Executive Headteacher, the kindest gentleman I have ever met, who taught me so much about the importance of valuing others and how to create amazing relationships.*

*Thank you Chris for helping me transform so many children's lives.*





# CONTENTS

**Foreword** ..... 8
**How to Use This Book** ..... 12
**Introduction to *The Happy Tank*** ..... 18
**My Story** ..... 22

PART 1:

**Understanding Your Habits and Mood** ..... 25
**Oxygen Mask** ..... 26
**Know Your Unhelpful Habits** ..... 28
**Creating Happy Habits** ..... 34
**The Mood Meter** ..... 39

PART 2:

**Six Ways to Fill Your Happy Tank** ..... 43
**Breathing** ..... 44
**Reflection** ..... 49
**Kindness** ..... 53
**Affirmations** ..... 60
**Gratitude** ..... 65
**Happy Tapping** ..... 71

PART 3:

**The Challenge** ..... 79
**The Happy Tank Challenge** ..... 80

**Congratulations!** ..... 88
**People to Follow** ..... 90
**Acknowledgements** ..... 92

# FOREWORD

What an honour it is to write a foreword for this book! Its central topic of happiness is very dear to my heart. When I was at primary school, I used to think about it a great deal. Why are some happy and others not? Why do my feelings of happiness seem to fade – like the ever-dimming memory of a holiday and lingering feeling of sadness at its distant recollection. I think many of us grow up thinking about questions like these as we try to understand life and what it entails.

Many thinkers such as the ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle, and Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama (whom you will catch a glimpse of later on in this book) held the belief that happiness is our ultimate goal in life – in other words, that it is not a constant state but something to be strived for in our actions and the relationships we foster around us and in the type of lifestyle we choose and can feel a sense of pride in.

Both Aristotle and the Dalai Lama believed that leading a happier life ultimately derives from our habits and day-to-day actions. "We are what we repeatedly do," Aristotle once wrote. "Happiness is not something ready-made, it comes from our own actions," the Dalai Lama said. Learning to be happier comes from the actions we carry out on a *daily* basis.



This is precisely where this book comes into the picture! Its author, John Magee, is a 21st century Aristotle, with the wisdom of the Dalai Lama, and the looks and humour of Paddy McGuinness (if unknown to you, look him up – the resemblance is to all accounts uncanny)! His book, *The Happy Tank*, is a practical guide on how to forego old, unhelpful habits and start new ones afresh that help us to feel happier for longer. You will learn how to take care of yourself better; how to use your breath to stay calm; how to reflect on what you want in life; how to be kinder; how to use affirmations to talk to yourself in a more supportive way; how to be grateful for what you have; and finally how to happy tap (I invite you to read on and find out about that!).

What I also love about this book is that John Magee shows us how to accept, even embrace our more uncomfortable emotions like sadness, anger or jealousy. As John says, feelings each have their place and none will ever stick around forever. A key to happiness is learning how to be okay no matter what the feeling we experience!

I hope you enjoy reading this book as much as I have and choose to embark on The Happy Tank Challenge to see how it can make a difference to your life and that of those you love – sharing is caring.

ADRIAN BETHUNE

**Author of *Wellbeing in the Primary Classroom*.**

Please sign your online pledge today to bring about change in your life and the lives of other pupils by visiting **www.kindnessmatters.co.uk/thehappytank**.

Visit my YouTube channel Kindness Matters TV and search The Happy Tank Challenge to take your practice to another level. Perhaps you will teach a grown-up, family member or friend. If you want more help in improving your daily practice, the video content is a great way to do so.

You will become part of a whole community of Kind Kids who like to take care of their mental health and wellbeing and learn new ways to feel calm and relaxed, which is important, is it not? Enjoy the book, have fun and never take yourself too seriously, while learning and getting better at creating happy habits by filling your Happy Tank daily... NOW, let's *pass it on!*

## THIS BOOK BELONGS TO

.....

**I pledge to complete my Happy Tank Challenge from this book.**

**I will then teach one or more parts of what I have learnt from *The Happy Tank* to a handful of my friends or family members, on the condition they pledge to pass it on and do the same!**

**Dated**.....

# HOW TO USE THIS BOOK IF YOU ARE A PUPIL

- Set aside 10 to 20 minutes to learn from each exercise.
- Read a section from *The Happy Tank* and practise its corresponding exercise first thing in the morning.
- Follow the book and work your way through the exercises at your own pace, aiming to become a master of each one. It doesn't matter how long you take to complete the book, you just need to stick at it and have fun! Remember practice makes progress, so go easy on yourself as you begin to create daily happy habits.
- Practise in the evening just before bed to support a deep relaxing sleep.
- If you feel worried or overwhelmed by things in life, practise filling your Happy Tank by choosing an exercise to complete.
- Make a daily commitment to yourself to fill your Happy Tank; this will create positivity to form happy habits.



## You might use this book if you are...

- **Afraid about your SATs.**
- **Worried about moving up a year group.**
- **Worried about transitioning into secondary school.**
- **Having a lot of thoughts running around your head.**
- **Wanting to learn new ways to calm down and worry less.**
- **Having unhelpful thoughts.**



# HOW TO USE THIS BOOK IF YOU ARE A TEACHER

*The Happy Tank* was written during the COVID-19 pandemic. This unprecedented time impacted pupils' mental health and exacerbated their anxiety around already-stressful situations such as SATs, moving up a class and falling behind in learning.

In this challenging context, I joined KS2 pupils in a year 6 setting at Westminster Primary Academy in Blackpool to develop an e-learning programme with six exercises to practise at school and at home to help reduce and manage unhelpful emotions.

All pupils responded exceptionally well to carrying out the exercises in their daily routine. They practised one exercise in the book each morning for a week as a collective at school, then again before bed with a parent or carer (and in time alone), before moving on to another exercise the following week and so on. The programme gave birth to *The Happy Tank* book that you hold in your hand now. Even though the book was written with a year 6 group, the book can still work well with KS3 pupils.



Here are some ways you can support your pupils' mental health and wellbeing.

- After registering your pupils, start the morning by reading a section of *The Happy Tank* to them, and applying its corresponding exercise. You can ask pupils to read along with you using their individual copy of the book.
- Make sure you follow the book sequentially and build up the exercises, moving up from breath work, to reflection and so on and so forth. At the end of the book, pupils should be well versed and will have practised each daily exercise with their peers and teacher.
- Practise individual sections and exercises in your whole-school assemblies. This is an excellent way for your school to collaborate as a whole and support your cohort's mental health and wellbeing.
- After lunch, it can be challenging for pupils to balance their energy. Build in protected time for pupils to fill one or more parts of their Happy Tank to help them to feel calm, relaxed and ready to learn.
- At the end of the school day, make time to review the section and exercise that your pupils have completed that day. This will allow them to reflect on the day itself as well as setting them up for their evening and the following morning.

# HOW TO USE THIS BOOK IF YOU ARE A PARENT OR CARER

Personally, as a parent, my children love to spend time with me filling their Happy Tank, and I truly enjoy the experience of sharing quiet time with them to do this whilst creating lifelong memories. It is a joy for me to see this being replicated by my pupils and their families in their respective home settings. Here are some ways you can support your child in filling their Happy Tank.

- Read a section from *The Happy Tank* and practise its corresponding exercise with your child or children first thing in the morning.
- Set aside 10 to 20 minutes after reading a chapter to discuss what you and your child have both learned and the experience you had doing its corresponding exercise together.
- Help your child or children use the book sequentially and build up exercises – spend as much time as you need on each exercise and only move on once it has been fully mastered.
- Practise the exercises before doing homework with your children to help them focus their attention.
- Practise with your children in the evening just before bed to support a deep relaxing sleep.
- If your child feels worried or overwhelmed by things in life, practise filling your Happy Tanks together.
- Make a daily commitment to yourself and your children to fill your Happy Tanks; this will create positivity and form happy habits.



# INTRODUCTION TO THE HAPPY TANK

What if there was a way to be happier in life and less sad? Wouldn't you like that? Let me be honest, it is impossible to be happy all of the time. Can you imagine always walking around with a big smile on your face and never experiencing other feelings? There would be no fun in that. In fact, that would be boring!

But if you are like me and all the pupils I work with in schools, who like to be referred to as Kind Kids, I imagine you would like to be happier (even if you're not happy all the time).





If that is the case, you are in the right place and are going to be amazed when you find out how easy peasy lemon squeezy it is to increase your levels of happiness.




It is simple – you have to accept that every day you will go through lots of feelings, including sadness, worry, anger, loneliness and many more upsetting emotions. Doesn't sound too happy, does it? Just trust me and keep reading.

Amidst all these feelings, did you know happiness is a choice? *What do you mean, a choice?* I hear you ask. Well, it just is! And I can swear that on my cat's life! I am going to teach you how you can be happier without having to swear on your cat's life, or if you don't have a cat, your dog's life, guinea pig's life, rabbit's life or goldfish's life. Okay, enough with the pet talk, I think you get my point.

Would you like to know another well-hidden truth I share with my family, friends and thousands of other Kind Kids like you? Being happier is easy; it is a daily practice, and one I will teach in this book. I will use a little humour because all the Kind Kids I have had the pleasure to work with tell me it puts a smile on their faces and makes them laugh, and if you didn't know, now you know: laughing is good for your mental health and wellbeing.

Back to my original point – *The Happy Tank* has changed many Kind Kids' lives and now, it will also change yours. You are your Happy Tank and by learning mindfulness-based exercises, practising them daily and creating happy habits, the exercises will fill your Happy Tank (which is you) and bring an abundance of happiness and calmness to your life.

## NOW PAUSE FOR A MINUTE!

Close the book and look at the front cover... What can you read under the title? 'Fill your life with happy habits'. Remember, happiness is a choice. Has it ever occurred to you that, by choosing to make a few simple changes, your life could change for the better, forever? I can just imagine the smile on your face when reading these words. The few small choices you make every day can bring about a HUGE amount of happiness in your life, in fact, more happiness than you can shake a stick at.

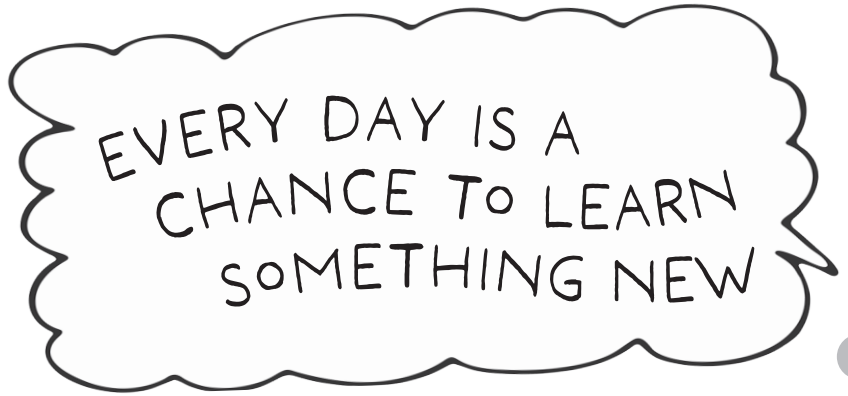
That was meant as an analogy, and if you don't know what that means, then ask your amazing teacher or a grown up. Remember, every day is a chance to learn something new and if you don't understand something, ask a question and get an answer to it!



## WARNING!

Turning the next page will begin your journey of having more daily happiness in your life. Hold onto your cap, and if you don't have a cap, grip the book tight, because you are about to start on the journey of a lifetime. Before you flip the page, answer the questions below:

- **It is important to do things that make you feel happy, is it not?**
- **You are interested in feeling happier more of the time, are you not?**
- **It is good to learn new ways to be happier more of the time, is it not?**



# MY STORY

Hi, my name is John Magee, the Kindness Coach. I imagine you know what kindness means, but what on earth is a kindness coach? Well, here are some easy peasy lemon squeezy clues:




- **What does a football coach help you get good at?**
- **What does a singing coach help you get good at?**
- **What does a swimming coach help you get good at?**
- **What does a netball coach help you get good at?**

So, what does a kindness coach help you get good at? You've got it. I help Kind Kids like YOU get better at being kind to yourself, others and the world.

Along my journey of kindness, I have worked with thousands of Kind Kids like you, perhaps ten thousand of them, and worked in hundreds of schools throughout the UK. Not bad! Guess what I found along the way? We all share the same goal: to feel happier more of the time, and less sad or worried.

It is important, isn't it, to practise being kind? Good... you and I are on the same page. How do I know that we are on the same page? Because here you are reading my Happy Tank book!



I am glad you agree, because it is my mission to coach YOU by teaching you how to fill your Happy Tank every day. I will take you on a magical journey and coach you on how to make new, daily, *happy habits* and understand how *practice makes progress*. We'll look at the word practice later together.

One of the many things you are really going to like about reading this book is how quickly you can be happier in the day, from practising and making a daily commitment to filling your Happy Tank.

Lots of Kind Kids have told me that my book has changed their lives. How exciting! They also said it is easy to carry out the exercises. I know reading this book will help you and that the sooner you start practising, the sooner you will have more happiness in your life.

You can also visit my YouTube channel, Kindness Matters TV, and find the section entitled *The Happy Tank*, where we can practise the exercises together with lots of other Kind Kids to support our mental health and wellbeing.