

WHAT IS HAPPINESS ?

The second week of September 2018, 4 groups of last year students (9th grade) had a philosophical dialogue on the question of happiness.

First, they read different definitions of happiness (Aristotle's Eudaimonia, definition in Psychology) then they watched a cartoon adapted from a children's book, « The Pig of Happiness »

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uoilYlww8M4>

- They first discussed these questions : Can happiness be contagious ? Does happiness come from inside or from outside ? Can we decide to be happy ?

Most students think being smiling and happy can influence others : when you see a smiling face, you want to communicate with this person and it makes you feel better. We tend to avoid grumpy people. If your parents are happy, your family life is going to be much more pleasant and you will probably feel happy yourself

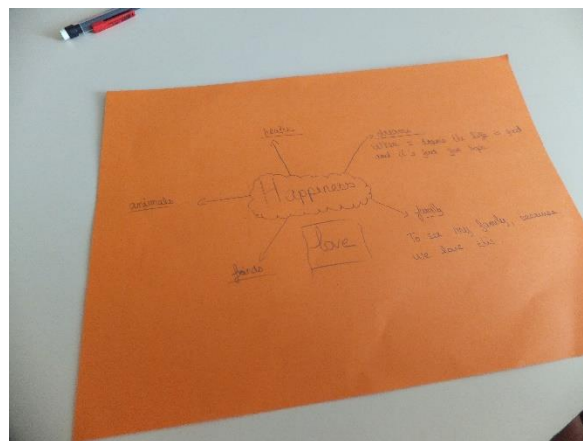
Students agreed to say that happiness comes both from inside and from outside.

We can try to look at things in a different way, to see the good sides of things instead of focusing on what is negative.

Being more positive and optimistic can help us if we have to face hardships, but we can't always be happy.

We can try and accept what we cannot change and make the best of it, but we should also try and change things for the better if we can. Sometimes, being angry or dissatisfied can be a trigger for action. And if we act and do useful things, it is going to make us happy.

- Then students sat in group of 4. Each students wrote 5 things they find essential in order to be happy on a piece of paper, then they exchanged with the other members of the group to decide on the 5 most important things to write on their common paper. Finally, the whole group sat in a circle to discuss.



The most chosen words were « **family** », « **friends** » and « **love** » : we need to love and to be loved to feel complete. If we are loved we know we exist, we are important, someone cares for us so we must be worthy of interest. Without love it is difficult to be confident, to trust people and dare do things. With our friends we can show the best part of ourselves and be generous, understanding, caring,

share everything. Sometimes it is more difficult with our family, specially when we are teenagers, but it is important to know who we are, where we come from. Hopefully, our family will always be here for us, whatever we do. It is often an unconditional love.

Beauty is also important to feel happy : enjoying the beauty of nature, artistic beauty (music, literature, poetry, paintings...), the beauty of people (inner beauty).

Dreams and **hope** enable us to visualise our future, to imagine a better life, to have a goal in life, to want to improve things. Without hope, there is no action. We need hope to fight our fears.

Some students also mentioned the importance of **doing interesting things**, of **discovering new things**.

In one class, nobody mentioned « **money** » as something essential to their happiness but in the other class nearly everybody did : they can't imagine themselves being happy without enough money to live a comfortable life. We agreed to say that the idea of happiness is not the same for everyone. We don't have all the same expectations. And it can also vary throughout our life : what seems essential to us when we are 14 years old will probably be different when we are older.

