Beyond Happiness: Helping teens find meaning through helping others

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Au delà du bonheur : Permettre aux lycéens de trouver du sens en aidant les autres

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Today

- Theoretical basis
- The Maac Program
- Pilot study
- Future directions

Theoretical basis

- Well-being depends on finding meaning and purpose in one's actions, in addition to experiencing positive emotions (e.g., Seligman, 2013, Ryff & Keyes, 1995).
- Prosocial behavior increases subjective well-being (e.g., Moll et al., 2006, Harbaugh, Mayr, & Burghart, 2007, Dunn et al., 2008).
- Social connection is key factor in psychological and physical wellbeing (e.g., Lieberman, 2015, Reis & Gable, 2003, Schreirer, Schonert-Reichl & Chen, 2013).

The main idea

- How can we apply this research in an educational setting?
 - Allowing students to gain meaning and purpose to their actions
 - Allowing them to help others and feel useful
 - Encouraging social connection

Maac: Massively Accessible Actions for Change

1. Projects that are highly individualized and personal, fun to do and helpful.

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Maac: Massively Accessible Actions for Change

- 1. Projects that are highly individualized and personal, fun to do and helpful.
- 2. A program that is:
 - Step-by-step
 - Accessible and easy-to-use
 - Leading each student from idea generation to action

Some examples

- Nicolas's legos
- Kevin's photographs
- Juliette's library
- Beatrice's dinners
- Patrick's bus
- Rose's letters
- www.maac-lab.com/maacstories

How to make helping easy

- Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985)
- Three fundamental needs:
 - Autonomy
 - Competence
 - Relatedness

Pilot study

- A high-school in Lyon, France
- "Première" = grade 11, students roughly 17 years old
- 30 students in two groups of 15
- 1h every week (or two) for 8 weeks
- Co-led with their teacher

Séance 1 : Introduction	Planting the change-maker seed.
Séance 2 : Idea Generation	Brainstorming all possible ideas.
Séance 3: Making the Pitch	Motivating and defending idea.
Séance 4: Destination Postcard	Projecting future success.
Séance 5 : Action Plan	Taking action with SMART goals.
Séance 6 : Communication	Inspiring others and generating accoutability.
Séance 7× : Go!	Planning to Doing, in little steps.
Séance 8 : Future Steps	Anticipating how to take project further.

Program Version 1

Initial ideas for maacs: What the students thought of doing

- · Distributing crepes to homeless people along the main axe of the city center.
- · Creating a "wish tree" in the public park in front of the school.
- · Giving out care packages to homeless people.
- Putting together "happiness boxes" for hospitalized children.
- Forming a 'elderly brigade' to look out and spontaneously help older people cross the street, carry groceries, etc.

Actions for maacs: What the students did

- Spent a morning looking for older people to help as part of an 'elderly brigade.'
- Distributed some pasta and sandwiches to homeless people.
- Carried out a social experiment involving sharing compliments to groups of friends in the street.

What we've learned

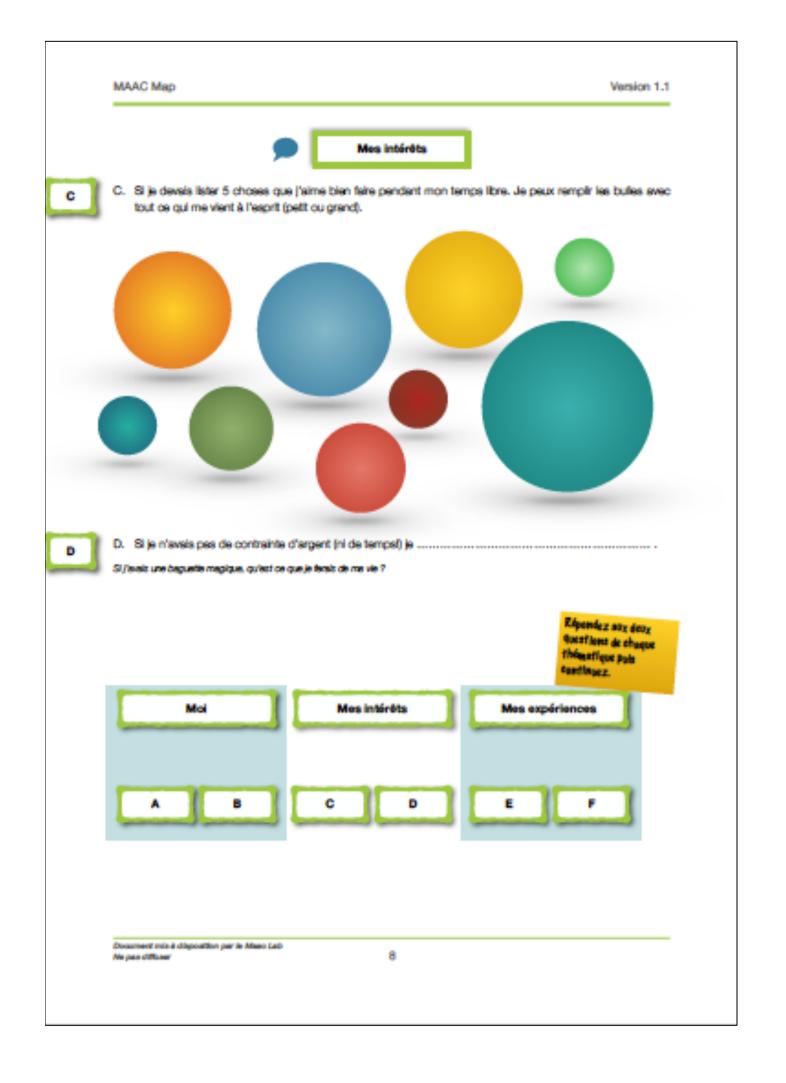
- Autonomy
 - intrinsic vs extrinsic motivation
- Sense of powerlessness
- Importance of direct social contact

Present and future directions

Maac Map

Present and future directions

Maac Map





Present and future directions

- Maac Map
- Maac Map Manual for teachers and educators
- Interactive website

Conclusion

- · Importance of social connection, meaning, and helping.
- Importance of accessibility
 - Free maac maps and teacher guides
- Open to collaborations with educators and others

Thank you!

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