



Teenagers constitute a unique societal subset in Western society, with their own way of living, thinking, and communicating. The world might be at their fingertips, but rising teen suicide statistics reveal another side of the happiness coin [\[1\]](#) .

So what is it that our young people are lacking? Can happiness be fostered, or even better, taught?

A British professor from Wellington College, Ian Morris, experimented in 2006 with how to teach happiness to young people in school. His aim was to provide young people with the skills they needed in order to live successfully, to increase awareness of themselves and others, and to improve their resilience. The ongoing program is aimed at responding to the students needs. [\[2\]](#)
[1](#)

According to this philosophy, schools should be places of enchantment, wonder and joy. Instead, they are all too often about testing, conformity and exams; about dividing up those who pass from those who don't. A recent study shows that school is the most prominent source of stress amongst 12 to 17 year olds [\[3\]](#) . Maybe it is time for a radical change?

Dr. Kate McReynolds, a Clinical Psychologist from New York University concludes in one of her studies that the predominant factor listed by young people as being integral to their happiness was positive relationships with family and friends. Additionally, religion received a moderately high ranking, with almost no one listing money. According to Dr. Reynolds, if society values the happiness of students, schools should increase the focus on more relevant learning

experiences as well as more time with family and friends. According to McReynolds, “time with nature, hanging out with friends, spiritual practices, or leisurely activities are now at odds with today’s culture of goal-directed, efficient, wealth-producing efforts.” [4]

Though today’s society tends to rely heavily on schools for the formation of its youth, it’s important to keep in mind that even if our schools and academic environments reform their teachings, family remains the first and most influential environment in which children and teens evolve and develop self-identity. In other words, happiness starts at home.

[1] Cf. *Youth suicide fact sheet 2005*, [http://www.suicidology.org/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=232&](http://www.suicidology.org/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=232&name=DLFE-24.pdf); [;name=DLFE-24.pdf](http://www.suicidology.org/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=232&name=DLFE-24.pdf)

[2] Ian Morris, happiness teacher at Wellington College in Crowthorne, <http://www.teachingexpertise.com/articles/teaching-happiness-at-wellington-college-2926>

[3] Kate McReynold, <https://great-ideas.org/McReynolds-Happiness.htm>

[4] *Ibid.*