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**Canada**

**An Assessment  
of a Positive Perspective/Highlight  
Program on Elementary School Children**

**Marnie L. St. Denis  
School of Human Kinetics  
University of Ottawa**

**A thesis  
submitted to the School of Graduate Studies  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Arts, Sport Studies**

**University of Ottawa, May, 1994**



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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of a 10 week positive perspective/highlight program developed specifically for elementary school children. Two intact classes of grade four children took part in the study, one experimental and one control. The experimental group participated in various games and activities designed to promote positive perspectives and help the children look for positive highlights in their daily lives. Significant positive effects were found in the experimental group with respect to increased frequencies of highlights, and positive feelings about self following the intervention program. Ten categories emerged from a qualitative analysis of over 2,000 highlights that children recorded in their logbooks: human contact, play/activity, contact with nature, tasting pleasures, accomplishments, discovery, entertainment, receiving/giving, positive anticipation, and relaxation.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Dr. Terry Orlick for the opportunity of participating in the Kids Stress Study (KISS), for his devotion and guidance, and for sharing his wisdom.

I would also like to thank the principal, staff and all of the children at the Broadview Public School who made this study possible. They created many highlight experiences for me.

My appreciation is also extended to David Shaw, a very special person with whom many highlights are shared, and for his continuous support and belief in me.

**DEDICATION**

**To my Mom and Dad for letting the sunshine in, and for teaching me to always go on the bright side of things.**



## An Assessment of a Positive/Highlight Program on Elementary School Children

It is clear from the literature that the implementation and systematic assessment of life skills programs have been minimal especially with children. Applied field work in providing mental skills training for children in sport and outside of sport suggests that children are highly capable of learning and applying a variety of important mind/body skills, and that these skills can be applied in a multitude of settings (Li-Wei, Qi-Wei, Orlick & Zitzelsberger, 1992; Orlick, 1991; 1992; Orlick & McCaffrey, 1991; Setterlind & Patriksson, 1982; Solin, 1991).

Bennett and Pravitz (1982) maintained that human beings are the product of their thoughts and that "by teaching children to think in positive ways, a better world will await them". Orlick (1993) contended that "most positive human attributes, including self-confidence, happiness and personal excellence are determined by the extent to which people think and act positively". He believed that we can free our children to live life more fully and experience life more joyfully by helping them develop positive life perspectives and positive mental skills at an early age. Harris and Harris (1984) suggested that we have to change how we think if we want to change how we feel.

It has been widely acknowledged that there is a need for programs that teach children to think positively and cope effectively (Orlick, 1993; Solin, 1991). Various forms of relaxation and cognitive control

training have demonstrated potential value for use with children (Altshuler & Ruble, 1989; Dise-Lewis, 1988; Edwards & Miller, 1989; Krampf, Hopkins & Byrd, 1979; Lewis, Siegel & Lewis, 1986; Setterlind & Patriksson, 1982; Smith & Womack, 1987; Unestahl, 1982). Problems in the general population have continued to increase in recent years (Hiebert, Kirby & Jaknavorian, 1989). It seems judicial at this point to explore alternative approaches with a preventative focus (Forman & O'Mally, 1985).

Research is clearly needed on how positive perspectives and positive mental skills can be taught to children to improve the quality of their everyday living (Hiebert, 1983; Orlick, 1992; Ryan, 1989; Solin, 1991).

The aim of this study was to explore one avenue for developing positive perspectives, namely "highlights". Orlick (1993) defined highlights as simple pleasures, little treasures, joys, lifts, pluses, positive feelings, meaningful contact, or anything that lifts the quality of that day for that person. A highlight is of any experience or event that is positive and uplifting for that specific individual.

The only mention of highlights in the literature as an approach to teaching positive perspectives was found in the works of Orlick (1991, 1992, 1993), and Siccone and Canfield (1993). Siccone and Canfield (1993) have written that highlights are past experiences that create feelings of happiness or success and that these serve as the foundation for building future successes. They believed that by acknowledging positive experiences, self-esteem would be increased.

If children are guided to look for and acknowledge the good things in their day, it is likely that they will experience more highlights. Looking for highlights places emphasis on noticing, recognizing, feeling, and appreciating the simple joys; many of which can otherwise go unnoticed or unappreciated (Orlick, 1993). If children are encouraged to acknowledge, discuss and record their highlights it should help them see the positive within their experiences, themselves and others (Orlick, 1993).

The specific purpose of this study was to assess the extent to which children could be taught to increase the frequency of their highlights in their daily lives.

#### Research Methods

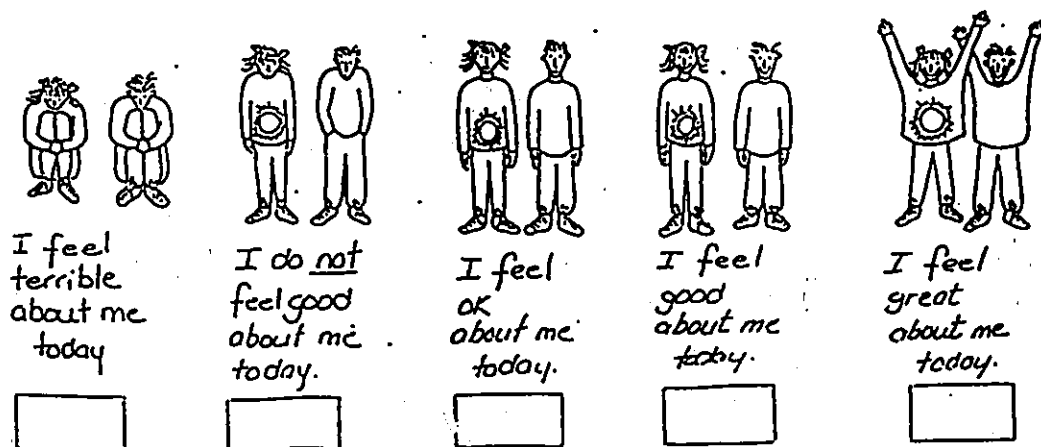
Subjects. The subjects for this study consisted of 39 grade four students from 2 intact classes, in an Ottawa region city school. The experimental group was comprised of 20 students and the control group included 19 students. Written parental consent was obtained prior to the commencement of the study for all individuals involved.

Highlight intervention program. The experimental group participated in 3 twenty minute highlight intervention (HIP) sessions per week for 10 consecutive weeks. The intervention program consisted of learning about highlights, recording highlights in logbooks and various other highlights activities (see Appendix B). The control group participated in normal classroom activities. The researcher was responsible for teaching the highlight intervention program.

Pre-test/post-test highlight sheets. During pre-test measures, a brief explanation and description of highlights was given (see Appendix C). Children in both the control and experimental group were asked to write down all the highlights they had experienced today or yesterday on a sheet of paper (see Appendix D). They did this on two separate days. This provided a pre-test baseline measure for frequency of highlights for each child. At the conclusion of the intervention program, post-test measures were performed with both the experimental and control groups in exactly the same manner as had occurred during the pre-tests. The data collected during pre-test and post-test were collected by researchers not directly involved in the intervention program.

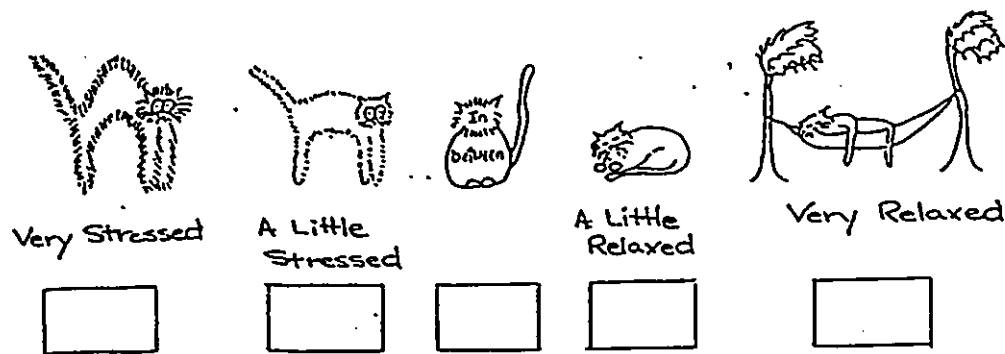
Self rating scales. Each child in the experimental and control groups completed two different self rating scales on two separate days during the pre-tests, and repeated this same procedure on two separate days during the post-tests. The first self rating scale was a five point "Feelings About Self Scale" pictorially represented by a child depicted in various body positions with accompanying descriptions ranging from "I feel terrible about me today" to "I feel great about me today" (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. The feelings about self scale.



The second self rating scale was a five point "Cat/Relaxation Scale" pictorially represented by a cat depicted in various degrees of tension and relaxation with accompanying descriptions ranging from "I feel very stressed" to "I feel very relaxed" (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. The cat/relaxation scale.



Donahue (1994) found that the test-retest reliability on both these scales with elementary school children was .95.

Logbooks. The logbook form of self report provides a wealth of information regarding on-going experiences and feelings (Allen, 1974; Halas, 1987; Lund, 1985; Witt, Cavell, Heffer, Carey & Martens, 1988). Gardner and Cole (1988) recommended that when using this procedure with children, target behaviours be explicitly defined and recording procedures be very simple. Garbarino and Stott (1978) also pointed out that children are most likely to offer information that is reliable when reporting about events that are part of or related to their own interests or part of their everyday experiences.

A logbook was distributed to each child in the experimental group. They were given the opportunity to personalize their logbooks with pictures or with magazine cutouts that represented highlights for them. Children recorded their highlights or joyful experiences in their logbooks during their day (see Appendix E). Logbooks were collected and monitored weekly. Positive feedback was written in the logbooks to encourage the children to continue to look for, and enjoy, their highlights. The logbooks were collected and qualitatively analyzed at the the end of the intervention program.

Interviews. Individual interviews were conducted with each child in the experimental group at the conclusion of the intervention program to elicit feedback with respect to their feelings and experiences (see Appendix F).

Questionnaires. Parents and teachers were asked to fill out a short questionnaire (see Appendix G and H) to gain feedback regarding the highlight intervention program.

### Results

The results from this study are presented as follows: 1) Independent samples t-tests assessing pre-post changes in frequency of highlight experiences, 2) Sign Test analysis of pre-post changes in self ratings on the "Feelings About Self Scale" and "Cat/Relaxation Scale", 3) logbook analysis of highlight categories and frequencies, 4) children's interviews, and 5) parent/ teacher comments.

Independent samples t-test results. Highlight difference scores for pre-and post-tests for the experimental and control groups are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for Highlight Difference Scores.

<u>Group</u>	<u>Highlights</u>
Experimental	7.76 (5.88)
Control	-0.14 (1.79)

The highlight difference score represents the highlight frequency noted in the post-test following intervention, compared to highlight frequency noted in the pre-test before intervention. For the purpose of analysis, each subject's two highlight pretest scores were averaged to a single score, and the same was done for post-test highlights scores. Results of an independent samples t-test on pre-post difference scores showed that the experimental group significantly increased the number of highlights experienced over the course of the study ( $T(18.78) = 5.3$ ,  $p < .05$ ). No significant change was evidenced for the control group. On the pre-test the experimental group highlight mean was 1.0, and the control group highlight mean was 1.3. Following the intervention program the experimental group highlight mean had increased to 8.5, and the control group highlight mean had decreased to 1.1. This represented an average increase of 7.8 highlights per subject in the

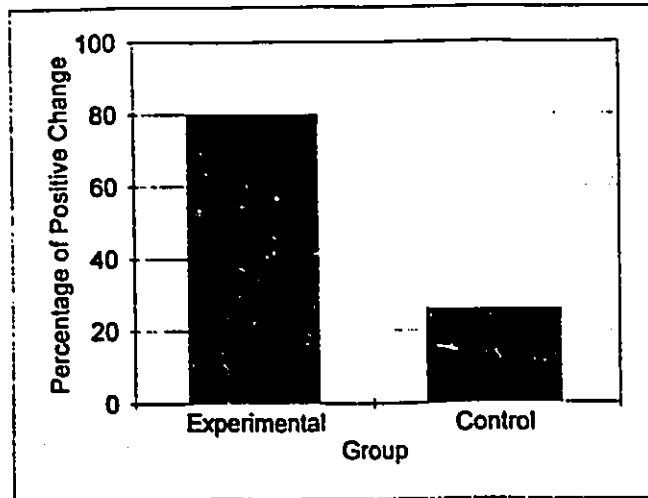
experimental group, and a slight decrease in highlights for subjects in the control group.

Self rating scales. The purpose of the self rating scales was to assess whether the children had changed their "Feelings About Self" in any direction, positive or negative. The non-parametric Sign Test (Siegel, 1956) was chosen for data analysis, as it is designed for measuring the significance of the direction of change and is particularly appropriate in small sample cases in which each subject can act as her or his own control. The only assumption underlying this test is that the variable under consideration has a continuous distribution (Siegel, 1956).

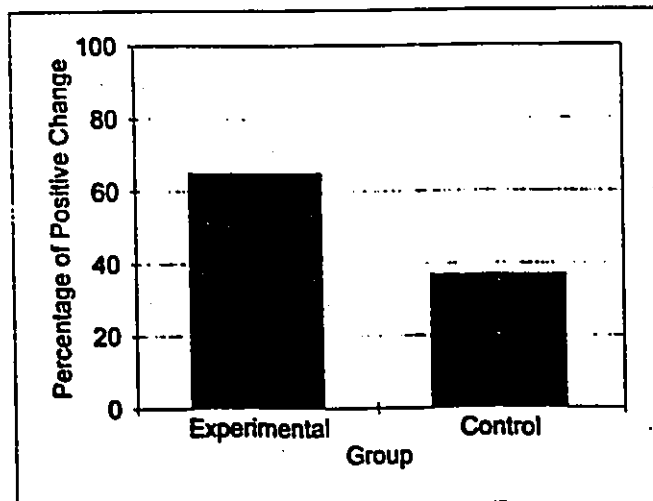
The Sign Test analysis demonstrated that a significant number of subjects in the experimental group increased their ratings on how positive they felt about themselves following participation in the intervention program (see appendix K). This was significant at the .002 level. No significant change was found for the control group. A significant number of children in the experimental group also increased their ratings on how relaxed they felt following participation in the intervention program. This was significant at the .03 level. No significant change was found for the control group. At the conclusion of the intervention program 80% of the experimental group reported feeling more positive about themselves (on the Feelings About Self Scale) as compared to 26% of the control group (see Figure 3). Sixty five percent of the experimental group children also reported feeling

more relaxed (on Cat/Relaxation Scale) as compared to 37% of the control group (see Figure 4).

**Figure 3.** Positive changes on feelings about self.



**Figure 4.** Positive changes on feelings of relaxation.



Logbook analysis. Individual logbooks were analyzed with respect to frequency and content of highlights recorded over the duration of the study. The children were given a few minutes to log their highlights each day during the three, 20 minute intervention sessions per week and were encouraged by their teacher to write their highlights at this time or during their free time each day. A total of 2,098 highlights were recorded by the grade four students over the ten week period.

Seven highlight categories were identified in a previous study by Orlick, (1993) while working with teenagers and young adults. These seven categories were used as a starting point for categorization in the present study. They were as follows : human contact, play/activity, contact with nature, accomplishments, discovery, relaxation, and good sensations.

Six of Orlick's original highlight categories were retained: human contact, play/activity, contact with nature, accomplishments, discovery and relaxation. Orlick's seventh category, good sensations was subdivided into 4 new separate categories: tasting pleasures, entertainment, buying/receiving and positive anticipation.

#### Good Sensation

Orlick (1993) described good sensation highlights as positive feelings of excitement; great sensations within your body; a nice hot shower, warm bath or jacuzzi; a refreshing swim; a favourite drink, dessert or meal; the feel of wearing special clothing, a game uniform or slipping into bed with clean, fresh, flannel sheets.

A colour coding system was used by the researcher to deductively categorize all highlights into the original seven categories developed by Orlick, 1993. Results of the current study showed the need for further category break down within the good sensation category. All highlights are indeed good sensations, thus greater clarity was needed with respect to what was most central to the good sensations. In the present study the following four new categories emerged through inductive categorization: tasting pleasures, entertainment, receiving/giving, and positive anticipation. These categories were added because the frequency of responses identifying these highlight domains warranted their addition. This resulted in a total of ten highlight categories emerging from the data in this study. All 10 highlight categories consisted of concrete, clear, tangible items rather than complex concepts that required conceptual definitions. The highlight categories are presented in order of frequencies from most frequently reported to less frequently reported. Table 2 displays the highlight frequencies and percentages of total highlights reported in this study.

Table 2

Highlight Categories and Frequencies.

HUMAN CONTACT	362	17.3%
PLAY	341	16.3%
CONTACT WITH NATURE	300	14.3%
TASTING PLEASURES	238	11.3%
ACOMPLISHMENTS	212	10.1%
DISCOVERY	171	8.2%
ENTERTAINMENT	164	7.8%
RECEIVING/GIVING	116	5.5%
POSITIVE ANTICIPATION	112	5.3%
RELAXATION	61	2.9%
OTHERS	21	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,098</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Human Contact

The human contact category was described by Orlick (1993) as a warm hug; a gentle smile; a positive comment; a good listener; shared laughter; a helping hand; a simple expression of respect, love, caring or appreciation; sharing special time with a loved one or good friend. Three hundred and sixty two highlights reported by the grade four experimental students (17.3% of the total highlights recorded) were categorized under the human contact. These highlight experiences resulted in good feelings that were initiated by or experienced directly through human contact. If another person was a central part of the highlight it was categorized under human contact (e.g. , "my mom hugged me", "met a new friend", "walked home with my friends", "a friend made me laugh", "got a big kiss from my dad", "got a letter from my best friend", "going to my friend's sleepover").

### Play/Activity

The play/activity category was described by Orlick (1993) as a joyful moment of playfulness, fun, laughter, movement, excitement, creation or interaction in play/physical activity or games; playing with friends; a special feeling, or feeling special, while playing. Three hundred and forty one highlights recorded by the grade four experimental group students (16.3% of the total highlights recorded) were categorized under play/activity. These highlight experiences resulted in good sensations or good feelings that were initiated by or experienced directly through play or physical activity (e.g. , "played a

fun game", "went swimming", "played outside after school", "got a piggy back ride", "played in my tree fort", "played hat tag at recess", "played hide and seek").

#### Contact with Nature

The contact with nature category was described by Orlick (1993) as a beautiful beach, lake, stream, tree, flower, cloud, breeze or sunset; a thousand diamonds glistening on the water or sparkling on the snow; a bird soaring or respectful contact with an animal in a natural setting. Three hundred highlights recorded by the grade four experimental students (14.3% of total highlights recorded) were categorized under contact with nature. These highlight experiences resulted in good sensations or good feelings that were initiated or experienced directly through contact with nature (e.g. , "I saw an apple tree blooming", "I planted lilies in the garden", "I saw a beautiful flower", "I saw a cardinal bird in my yard", "a bird sang to me this morning", " the sun is shining", "it is sunny and warm").

#### Tasting Pleasures

The tasting pleasures category was described as a favourite drink, dessert, or meal; a special treat or snack; eating at a special place, or eating something yummy. Two hundred and thirty eight highlights recorded by the grade four experimental students (11.3% of total highlights recorded) were categorized under tasting pleasures. These highlights experiences resulted in good sensations or good feelings that were initiated by or experienced directly through tasting pleasures

(e.g. , "I ate twenty eight raspberries", "I had a tall glass of milk at breakfast", "I had a brownie in my lunch", "I had pizza for supper last night").

### Accomplishments

The accomplishment category was described by Orlick (1993) as learning something new, accomplishing something you have been working at, setting a simple goal and completing it, finding a solution, feeling improvement, doing something well, doing your best or making a meaningful contribution. Two hundred and twelve highlights recorded by the grade four experimental students (10. 1% of the total highlights recorded) were categorized under accomplishments. These highlight experiences resulted in good sensations or good feelings that were initiated by or experienced directly through accomplishments (e.g. , "I did all my math on my own", "I got a very good report card", "I didn't litter for a week", "I did well on a quiz", "I got a sticker for good behaviour", "I won a running race", "I finished my project").

### Discovery

The discovery category was described by Orlick (1993) as discovering something new, special, or personally meaningful, for example, through interacting, observing, playing, performing, reading, listening, helping, travelling, going someplace new or different; creating something novel, interesting, fun or meaningful, for example, through imagining, reflecting, writing or working with your mind and/or body. One hundred and seventy one highlights recorded by the

grade four students (8.2% of the total highlights recorded) were categorized under discovery. These highlight experiences resulted in good sensations or good feelings that were initiated by or experienced directly through discovery (e.g. , "I learned how to make a rainbow", "I found an attic in my closet", "I found out I could wiggle my ears", "I learned about decimals", "I found out if I work hard I can do a good job", "I got to make pottery for the first time", "I'm doing research on the frog").

#### Entertainment

The entertainment category was described as watching a favourite television program, video or movie, an entertaining book; listening to music or the radio; or going to watch sport events. One hundred and sixty four highlights recorded by the grade four experimental students (7.8 % of the total highlights recorded) were categorized under entertainment. These highlight experiences resulted in good sensations or good feelings that were initiated by or experienced directly through entertainment (e.g. , "I read on the porch", "I watched my favourite TV show", "I listened to my favourite music", "the Maple Leafs won last night", "I watched the Lynx play baseball last night").

#### Receiving/Giving

The receiving/giving category was described as good sensations emitted from buying something new, receiving a gift or giving someone a present. One hundred and sixteen highlights recorded by the grade four students (5.5% of the total highlights recorded) were

categorized under receiving/giving. These highlight experiences resulted in good sensations or good feelings that were initiated by or experienced directly through receiving or giving (e.g. , "I got a new skipping rope", "I got a new Nintendo game", "I bought my friend a birthday gift", "I went shopping and got new clothes", "I got a balloon from a clown").

### Positive Anticipation

The positive anticipation category was described as the anticipation of something good that was going to happen but that had not yet happened. This highlight category revolved around the thinking about something joyful that was about to happen or the inner excitement about an upcoming event or experience. One hundred and twelve highlights recorded by the grade four students (5.3% of the total highlights recorded) were categorized under positive anticipation. These "thinking ahead" highlights resulted in good sensations or good feelings that were initiated by or experienced directly through positive anticipation (e.g. , "Soon its my birthday", "I'm going to a party", "it's March break soon", "my baseball season starts soon").

### Relaxation

The relaxation category was described by Orlick (1993) as a joyful moment of relaxation, calm or tranquility; slowing things down; a quiet repose; a time-out for yourself or with a loved one to enjoy, relax or reflect. Sixty one highlights recorded by the grade four students (2.9% of the total highlights recorded) were categorized under

relaxation. These highlight experiences resulted from good sensations or good feelings that were initiated by or experienced directly through relaxation (e.g. , "I had a nice bubbly bath", "I had a good night sleep", "I did a relaxation exercise").

### Others

The remaining 1% of the highlights did not appear to fit clearly into any of the highlight categories previously mentioned (e.g. , " I just had a great day", "I went to the washroom", "it's Thursday").

Interrater reliability. Once the two researchers had reached a consensus on categories and category descriptions, an interrater reliability check was conducted with respect to coding the children's responses. One hundred highlight slips of paper written in the children's handwriting and representing all ten highlight categories were mixed together and placed on a table. One researcher placed each highlight slip into one of the 10 different envelopes, each of which had a different category title. A second researcher then independently took the same 100 highlight slips and placed each into one of the 10 envelopes. Ninety seven percent of the highlight slips were independently coded in the same category by the two researchers. For eight highlight categories there was 100% agreement in coding the responses between the two raters: human contact, play/activity, contact with nature, tasting pleasures, accomplishments, entertainment, receiving/giving, and relaxation.

Two disagreements occurred in the positive anticipation category and one in the discovery category, primarily because the children's highlights were not mutually exclusive. Highlight categories are not always mutually exclusive. Sometimes they involve more than one category, for example, "walking with my dad on the beach", could include human contact (Dad), contact with nature (the beach), and play/physical activity (walking). In these cases the best guide was to place the highlight within the category felt to be the most central to the experience.

Children's interviews. A post-test interview was conducted with each grade four experimental group child to gain a better understanding of their thoughts and perspectives on the highlight/relaxation program (see Appendix F). Interviews were conducted by researchers who were not directly involved in teaching the highlights program.

When asked what they thought about the highlight program, 100% of the grade four children in the experimental program responded positively. The following are typical examples of their responses, "I enjoyed it a lot", "It was pretty fine, relaxing", "I liked it", "It was fun".

When asked about what they liked the best, the responses fell into the following four categories: The games = 33.3% (e.g. , "highlight pictionary", "all the games they were fun"); The laughing exercise = 33.3% (e.g. , "when we made the laughing tape", "the laughing exercise", "it was really funny"); The relaxation/imagery tapes= 26.6%

(e.g. , "laying on the floor and listening to tapes - especially Soaring", "going to your own special place", "it was neat"); and No answer= 6.66%.

When asked about what they disliked the childrens' responses fell into the following five categories: Writing highlights = 40% (e.g. , "everyday writing our highlights - I don't like to do work"); The relaxation/imagery tapes = 26.6% (e.g. , "some relaxation tapes"); Nothing they disliked = 20% (e.g. , "I liked everything"); Doing the scales = 6.66%, and Missing gym = 6.66% (e.g. , "missed gym occasionally").

All of the students in the experimental group said that they had learned something from the highlight program. When asked about the main things they had learned the children's responses fell into the following four categories: Learned how to notice happy things = 46.6% (e.g. , "how to notice little things in life", "that you should always go on the bright side", "I learned how to realize little things", "to find highlights to be happier", "little highlights are worth finding"); Learned how to relax = 26.6% (e.g. , "how to relax when you're under stress", "that if you're stressed just think about the good things of it", "to not be stressed", "let your mind relax - go blank", "I learned to relax myself"); Learned to respect myself and others = 20% (e.g. , "to respect other people", "to like other people", "to handle things", "don't let yourself down"); No answer = 6.66%.

When asked, what is the meaning of a highlight? One hundred percent of the grade four children described it as a happy or joyful experience. Some representative comments were: (e.g. , "something happy", "really joyful", "something that's good in your life", "small little happies that happen in your day", "the little things in life that are good", "an important thing in life to notice", "relaxation", "happiness", "sharing the good things in life", "having fun", "something that happens that means happy").

When asked why highlights are important 100% of the children said that they are important because they make our lives better in some ways. The following are some examples of their responses: (e.g. , "because if there are no highlights, then everybody would be sad", "because you feel better after you talk about them with friends", "because you should always realize the small happy things in life", "because they make you feel good and happy", "if you never have highlights you get depressed and you'd never be any good at anything", "so when you come home from school and you've had a bad day, you can just think of something good like if you've had a good lunch or something").

When asked if they had taught or told anyone about the highlight program 66.6% of the children said "yes". Those who did tell others about the program generally told their families and/or friends.

When asked what they could do to make themselves feel better if they were stressed or worried, 100% of the grade four children

mentioned either thinking of highlights or another positive coping strategy taught in the program. Most of their responses (80%) focussed on highlights: (e.g. , "I could list my highlights", "have a hobby of thinking of highlights", "think of the good things that have happened", "think about the good things and solve what's worrying me", "turn a worry into a highlight", "write down all my highlights or write down my lowlights and turn them into highlights", "write highlights and think of happy things"). Other coping strategies (20%) mentioned in the interviews included: (e.g. , "Go to my room and relax", "read or rest", "take deep breaths and/or talk to my parents").

When asked why they think it is difficult for some people to look for highlights some of their responses were: (e.g. , "because people don't notice the normal things that are happy during the day", "people are lazy and don't look for highlights", "people want to be miserable and not positive", "people take things for granted, big and small", "sometimes when you go to a baseball game people don't think of the little highlights like eating a hot dog, and getting a big drink", "in a big highlight there is always little highlights", "in simple little highlights there is always more little highlights, like if you're at a game, a big highlight, you get some popcorn, little highlight, and lots and lots of butter, they are even smaller highlights").

When asked if they thought they had changed in any way from what they learned in the highlight program, 100% of the children indicated that something positive had happened to them (e.g. , "Yes, I

think of good more", "Yes, I'm less stressed", "I think of highlights a lot now", "I feel better inside", "I cooperate with other people more", "I feel happier", "now I know what I can do to feel better").

When asked if they would continue to look for highlights on their own now that the program was over, 93.3% of the children said that they would continue to look for highlights.

Parent/teacher comments.

Parent Questionnaires were distributed to parents of children in the highlight program to gain an understanding of their perception of the program (see Appendix G). Although a high percentage of parents did not respond to the questionnaire, those who did respond (55%) had some interesting comments. When asked if their child had mentioned the highlight program to them at home, 100% (n=11) of the parents who responded to the questionnaire said "yes". The children shared various relaxation exercises, games, spaghetti toes, and highlights, and said that it was a program to teach children to look for highlights, to relax, and handle stress.

Many parents commented that the children taught them about highlights and how to look for them, how to make lowlights into highlights, how to relax and think of positive things, and how to use the cat scale (stress versus relaxation).

All parents said that their child enjoyed the program. Typical comments included: "He liked the program", "she seemed happy with it", "he/she said that it was fun, it's good, feels great", "talked about it

a lot", and "spoke fondly of it". Ninety one percent of the parents (n=10) said that they thought the program was beneficial for their child. Typical comments were as follows: "It helps her to know what to do when she is stressed", "I highly support this kind of program - it should be taught from a young age", "when irritated, at home, she goes to her Own Special Place or Cloud", "hopefully what she learned will be used in the future", "there is a real need for programs like this".

Teacher A questionnaire was distributed to the grade four experimental teacher to gain an understanding of her perception of the program's content and impact (see Appendix H). The teacher's comments were very positive and supported the data collected from both children and parents. When asked what she thought of the highlight/relaxation program, the teacher said, "It was very helpful to have the children think about the small pleasures in life, things that they take for granted. Student's learned to focus on the bright side. Hopefully this will extend into their years of growing up".

When asked if she had noticed any carryover from the highlight program the teacher responded, "Yes, overall, the children seem to have more positive attitudes, especially those who were at a low level to begin with. Some children seem to have taken more responsibility for their feelings. I have been using relaxation and imagery techniques with the children, in writing stories and relaxing after physical education as well as with myself. It's been very positive in my view, and the highlight games were great".

### Discussion

The results of this study clearly indicated that the children who participated in the Highlight intervention program: 1) enjoyed the activities in the program, 2) increased their frequency of highlights, and 3) increased their ratings on how positive they felt about themselves. The results suggest that children can learn to increase the highlights they experience in their daily lives if they are taught how to do so in an appropriate way, and that when they focus on positive events or positive experiences they begin to feel better about themselves.

This finding is supported by the work of Siccone and Canfield (1993), who maintained that highlights create feelings of happiness or success and that by acknowledging these positive experiences, self esteem is increased. It is logical to assume that if a child recognizes, acknowledges and/or experiences more positive events during the day, everyday, he/she will begin to feel better about themselves. This study supports this link between positive experiences and positive self esteem.

It is interesting to note that children in this study rated themselves as feeling more relaxed following the intervention program. Teaching positive perspectives using a highlights approach may have the additional advantage of increasing children's overall feelings of relaxation. Other researchers, using various direct methods of relaxation have found relaxation effects (Hiebert & Eby, 1985; Setterlind & Patriksson, 1982; Setteling, 1982; Krampf, Hopkins &

Byrd, 1979), however the current focused on influencing perspective as opposed to teaching specific relaxation skills.

Highlight logbooks provided an excellent opportunity to gain information about what the children perceived to be highlights or positive experiences. Regular logging of highlights during the intervention program allowed the researcher to extract unique information that was pertinent to this study. Similar methods of data collection should be considered for future studies. The logbook analysis of children's highlights provided some new information that may be useful in helping to children recognize and seek out specific highlights in a variety of different domains. From a list of over 2,000 highlights, 10 highlight categories emerged, the most prevalent of which were human contact, play/activity, contact with nature, tasting pleasures, accomplishments, and discovery. It is likely that children can be taught to appreciate more highlights in each of these domains.

An interesting unexpected finding in this study was the emergence of a positive anticipation highlight category. Highlights in this category were experienced simply by thinking positively about them, or by thinking positively about an upcoming event. It is likely that thinking negatively about an upcoming event (negative anticipation) would have the opposite effect, thereby creating a "lowlight", or stressful experience.

Individual interviews with the children in the experimental group, following the intervention program, support the overall positive

findings in this study. Some positive changes they noticed in themselves included: "I think of good more", "I'm less stressed", "I feel better inside", "I cooperate with other people more", "I feel happier" and "now I know what to do to feel better". The children enjoyed the highlight activities and felt that highlights were a great way to feel positive, to feel more relaxed, and to be happier.

Orlick (1993) stated that "It is extremely important to teach children to think positively early on so they can feel good about themselves and their abilities, develop their capabilities, experience less anxiety, and balance the abundance of negative input to which they will be subjected". It appears that "Highlights" are one means of moving along this path.

The ultimate goal is to teach children positive thinking skills, which will enable them to grow with self-confidence, and maintain a sense of perspective and positiveness throughout their lives (Orlick, 1993).

This study suggests that children benefit from experiencing a greater frequency of highlights in their lives, and that by fully appreciating highlights they can increase their positive feelings about themselves. Further research is needed, however, to verify these findings and to explore the effects of longer term interventions.

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Appendix A  
Research Proposal



EVALUATION OF A LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN: TEACHING  
POSITIVE PERSPECTIVES THROUGH GAMES AND ACTIVITIES

There is written acknowledgement by many researchers concerning the need for stress management and life skills programs for children (Couille, 1979; Smith & Womack, 1987; Martin, 1988; Altshuler & Ruble, 1989), and it is equally acknowledged that literature on the implementation of such programs is minimal. Applied field work providing mental training services for children in and out of sport has demonstrated however, that children are highly capable of learning and applying a variety of important mind/body skills (Orlick & McCaffrey, 1991), and that they can apply these mental skills in a multitude of settings ( ie. play, games, sport, academics, school, music, dance, performing arts, at home, during conflicts, when experiencing fear, during treatments, or when recovering from illness or injury). Orlick and McCaffrey (1991) suggest that the application of mental training reaches far beyond sport psychology. They maintain that every child will experience growth, and some degree of success, if someone who cares devotes time to nurturing important mental skills related to human development (Orlick & McCaffrey, 1991). Bennett and Pravitz (1982) concur by claiming that human beings

are the product of their thoughts and by teaching children to think in positive ways, a better world will await them. In a similar light Orlick (1993) states that "all positive human attributes, including self-confidence, happiness and personal excellence are determined by the extent to which people think and act positively". Orlick (1993) believes that we can free our children to live life fully and experience life joyfully by helping them develop positive life perspectives and positive mental skills at an early age.

A thorough review of the literature in fact, indicates that there are no documented research programs currently available that do full justice to teaching children positive perspectives. Research is lacking on how positive perspectives and mental skills can be taught to all children to improve the quality of their everyday living. For the purpose of this investigation, the "highlight" concept will be studied. It is anticipated that mental training or life skills training that enhance children's positive perspectives specifically in the area of "highlights" could have a positive effect on the lives of children.

### Statement of the Problem

This study is part of a larger study which has been designed to teach primary school children mental skills and positive life perspectives. A review of the literature indicates that documentation of a "highlights" approach to teaching positive perspectives could only be found in the recent works of Orlick from whom this idea stems. This is, therefore, an exploratory study into the concept of "highlights", to specifically investigate whether children can be taught to increase the "highlights" in their lives, by teaching them to look for, acknowledge and appreciate the good things that occur in their day.

### Research Hypothesis

It is expected that the students who receive the highlight-intervention program will experience more highlights following the intervention than the students who did not participate.

### Operational Definitions

**Highlights:** Simple pleasures, little treasures, joys, or anything that lifts the quality of that day for that person (Orlick, 1993).

**Highlight Areas:** Human contact, nature, play,

accomplishments, relaxation, discovery, or positive sensations (Orlick, 1993).

Lowlights: Opposite of highlights, things that make you feel badly, worried or stressed.

Positive Thinking: Ability to think, dream, focus, and act in positive ways (Orlick, 1993).

#### Significance of the Study

There is consensus as to the need and value of teaching children life skills and stress control techniques to better cope with stress and improve the quality of life (Orlick, 1992; Smith & Blotcky, 1989; Spirito, Overholser & Stark, 1989; Ryan, 1989; Solin, 1991), yet research on this subject is scarce. Perhaps this is so, because many people believe that childhood stress does not exist. Some have argued that childhood is a happy time, that today's children lead relatively easy lives, and that their problems are trivial in the grand scheme of things (Heibert, 1988). Research in this area is clearly needed to identify the needs of children and appropriate techniques for assisting them in improving general life skills (Orlick, 1993) and in reducing stress (Edwards and Miller, 1988).

This study will allow for further insight into one

area of mental training and positive life perspectives for children specifically that of highlights. The few researchers who have focused their efforts in this area maintain there is a need for the implementation of child oriented programs which foster positive life skills (Orlick, 1992; Smith & Blotcky, 1989; Spirito, Overholser & Stark, 1989; Ryan, 1989; Solin, 1991). It is anticipated that teaching children positive life perspectives through the "highlight" concept will be effective for children in terms of increasing the frequency of highlights experienced daily. The results of this study will hopefully be of interest to teachers and curriculum designers and lead to recommendations for the inclusion of "highlight" activities into the school teaching curriculum. The ultimate goal is for us to help teach children positive thinking skills, which will enable them to grow with self-confidence, and maintain a sense of perspective and positiveness throughout their lives (Orlick,1993).

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Stress-related problems in the general population have continued to increase in the recent past (Hiebert, Kirby & Jaknavorian, 1989). It seems judicial then to explore alternative approaches to stress control perhaps with a preventative focus (Forman & O'Mally, 1985). During recent years a growing interest in different techniques of tension control has appeared in many divergent fields such as sport, education and medical treatment (Setterlind & Patriksson, 1982). In spite of the increased interest in this area, the frequency with which the techniques appear to be used is very small (Setterlind & Patriksson, 1982). This deficiency is especially notable regarding research on children and adolescents, where very few studies have been done (Setterlind & Patriksson, 1982).

This review will look at mental training for children in sport, in school and in the hospital. A discussion of positive thinking and highlights will follow.

### Mental Training with Children

Research in the area of mental training with children has been somewhat limited in scope (Li-Wei,

Qi-Wei, Orlick and Zitzelsberger, 1992; Orlick, 1992; Solin, 1991). However, it has been suggested that the use of mental training with children may be particularly promising; as it offers a means of learning skills faster and more easily, as well as an opportunity to learn mental skills at an early age that can give children greater control over their personal destiny (Li-Wei, Qi-Wei, Orlick and Zitzelsberger, 1992).

#### Mental Training with Children in Sport

Mental training programs for children have been utilized in selected sport settings in Canada for approximately 20 years. These programs have been aimed at helping children develop the mental skills necessary for keeping sport in perspective (Orlick & McCaffrey, 1991). The goals of these programs are to primarily teach young athletes the basics of relaxation, imagery, focusing and refocussing skills, in the attempt to aid them in their sporting pursuits. Wilson (1984), states that children often find themselves removed from the game after making an error, and that this may tend to make the child feel anxious about making mistakes. Also, children who are already disappointed from losing

or being behind in competition need to be helped to think positively, and focus on their small successes (Wilson, 1984). Unestahl (1982) believes that there are many mental techniques which have been used, or could be used, to influence sport performance.

#### Mental Training with Children in Non Sport

A pilot study performed in Sweden in 1978 by Setterlind and Unestahl proved to be very successful and encouraging. It reported some very positive results which strengthened the belief that mental training skills could be helpful for children in situations at home, in school, in sport, and in the community. This study demonstrated that the teaching of different kinds of tension control techniques are useful and helpful for teaching children the mental skills necessary to better deal with life.

Setterland and Patriksson (1982) applied a six-week program of "tension control" to almost three hundred Swedish school children and youth from 12 to 17 years of age. They were taught techniques of muscular relaxation, mental relaxation, and later in the program they were given techniques which enabled them to choose their own methods of reducing stress in their bodies

and minds (Setterlind & Patriksson as cited in Cratty, 1984). It was reported that for the most part, the youths not only evidenced the ability to acquire the techniques taught to them, but reported that they found the experience(s) pleasant and rewarding. The results of this investigation make it apparent that if given the techniques for inducing muscular and emotional relaxation, children of all ages are able to understand and apply them to their own "psyches" (Setterlind & Patriksson as cited in Cratty, 1984). It is interesting to note that among the perceived subjective effects of the relaxation training 52% thought that they could do their school work better, 33% believed that their sleep had improved, 60% felt less stressed and 40% felt more at ease with themselves (Setterlind & Patriksson, 1982).

For a number of years now, Sweden has been the only country in the world to have implemented a mental training component into their regular primary school curriculum. This program focuses on teaching children relaxation techniques, imagery, and stress control skills (Solin, 1991), with the emphasis placed on relaxation abilities. Documentation on this program is

limited however, and is not entirely based upon child centred methods, but rather upon adult stress techniques.

Krampf, Hopkins and Byrd (1979), state that muscular relaxation is a program that should be included in the schools, beginning with the early elementary students as it will teach students how to conserve their energy and thereby avoid undue tensions while growing in our society. They also state that in the era of preventative medicine, muscular relaxation needs to be included in school health and physical education programs if we are to educate our students totally.

Recently a mental training skills program was introduced to normal elementary school children through the medium of play and games (Cox, 1991; Orlick, 1992). Intervention involving focusing and stress control activities were designed by Orlick specifically for preschool and elementary school children. These activities were designed to help children develop their mental strengths and stress control skills, and were presented to the children in a fun-filled and supportive manner (Orlick & McCaffrey, 1991).

A six-week program almost identical to the one previously mentioned was introduced to an elementary school in Manotick, Ontario to implement some of the activities developed by Orlick. Children from kindergarten to grade six were involved in this program, and all were seen at least once a week by the program leaders. These children were taught co-operative games, relaxation, focusing, refocussing, distraction control and imagery skills. In addition, they were also introduced to the idea of "highlights". All of these skills were taught in order for the children to learn certain life skills believed to be of great benefit to them. The effects of neither of these programs were tested in a scientific way. Other studies utilizing relaxation techniques have reported that children can learn to relax and that there are subsequent improvements in target behaviours such as study habits, parental and teacher ratings of appropriate behaviour, reaction time, and gross motor behaviour (Brandon, Eason & Smith, 1986).

In addition to the work performed in Sweden, efforts in the area of mental training with sick children have also been documented, although no

scientific research has been done. Orlick's knowledge of mental skills that arose from years of contact with elite athletes (Orlick, 1990; Orlick & Partington, 1986), has helped in the development of proper mental training procedures for athletes of all ages, students and children stricken with illness. Orlick and McCaffrey (1991) suggest that there are many areas in which mental training teaching has proven extremely successful, but applying these principles to improving the quality of life for a seriously ill child has probably been the most rewarding. Such skills as imagery, focusing, relaxation, positive thinking and refocussing appear to be helpful mental strategies for children stricken with illness. Emphasis of dwelling only on positives and acknowledging the highlights that occur during the day are also tools that have helped children cope with the stressors of illness. A quote by a nine year old cancer patient puts it all in perspective, " When you are fighting for your life you have to be positive, look for the good things, do some fun things, believe in yourself, and imagine yourself being strong and healthy" (Orlick & McCaffrey, 1991).

### Positive Thinking

A discussion on "highlights" must first begin with an overview of positive thinking. Thinking is said to influence everything that we set out to do. This means that what we think about becomes our reality (Bennett & Pravitz, 1982). Nideffer (1981) states that we are no better than we think we are. All worthy accomplishments, interactions, and human performances are grounded in positive thinking (Orlick, 1993). It is believed that our lives are spent thinking, even if we are not aware of the thinking going on (Porter & Foster, 1990). Our minds have about ten million thoughts per day, and once we become aware of the thoughts that we are constantly processing, we will become aware of how many of those are negative (Harris & Harris, 1984). It is in Cratty's (1984) opinion that thoughts may be learned, and changed in positive directions just like learning a physical skill and changing it by learning how to improve it. Harris and Harris (1984) have written that we feel the way we think; therefore, we have to change how we think if we wish to change how we feel. It is possible to change our moods and emotions in positive directions by

changing the thoughts which underlie those moods (Cratty, 1984), and so the idea of highlights emerges.

### Highlights

Orlick (1993) defines highlights as simple pleasures, little treasures, joys, lifts, pluses, positive feelings, meaningful contact, or anything that has lifted the quality of that day for that person. A highlight is the occurrence of any event in one's day that is positive and uplifting for that specific individual. It is anticipated that children need only to be guided to look for and acknowledge the good things in their day, so as to notice and live life's simple joys. Looking for highlights places emphasis on noticing, recognizing, feeling, appreciating the simple joys - any of which otherwise often go unnoticed or unappreciated (Orlick, 1993). Recognizing highlights helps children to realize that most of life's highlights are of a very simple nature and well within reach, every day (Orlick, 1993). Children should be encouraged to record their highlights in an attempt to demonstrate that highlights force them to see the positive within themselves, in their experiences, and through their contact with others too (Orlick, 1993).

Children should be encouraged to see the simple highlights that can be experienced in a variety of ways, for example through human contact, nature, play, accomplishments, relaxation, discovery, or positive sensations (See Appendix A for List of Highlight Areas).

Measurement throughout the program will involve student self-reports and interview sessions with the researchers.

#### Interviewing Children

Treating the child as an informant about her own feelings, behaviours, abilities, and social relationships is a relatively recent phenomenon (Edelbrock & Costello, 1984). Interviewing children is an important way for adults to obtain information from children (Garbarino et al., 1989). With the help of skilled interviewers, even young children can provide rich verbal accounts of their own experiences and of their understanding of the world around them (Garbarino et al., 1978). Consideration will be given to the empathy, the genuine appreciation of the feelings and perceptions of the child and an interest in understanding the world or some part of it in the way

the child does see it will be acknowledged by the interviewer. Since children vary in their linguistic and interactive competence, and since the language ability of young children is essentially different from that of adults, it cannot be assumed that interviewing methods suitable for adults will work with children (Garbarino et al., 1978). Interviewers are responsible for adjusting their interviewing methods to the communicative competencies of the respondent (Garbarino et al, 1978). Garbarino et al., (1978) recommend that interviews be transcribed to allow the researcher to determine with substantial accuracy the meaning of statements made by the children in interviews and to enhance the validity of the interview process.

#### Self-Monitoring with Children

The log book form of self report can be advantageous as it provides a wealth of information regarding students on-going experiences and feelings (Halas, 1987). As Hornerson et al (1978) indicate, self- reports are very useful measurement tools. When feedback is asked of the respondent they tend to feel that their input is important, thus increasing the likelihood of honest responses (Henerson et al, 1978).

Gardner and Cole (1988) recommend that target behaviours must be explicitly defined for the children; counting and recording procedures must be very simple; the time period which self-monitoring is to be well defined; frequent reliability checks must be made of the recordings, with appropriate feedback given; sufficient practice must be provided to ensure that procedures are clearly understood.

A limitation of the log book self-report is that it is dependent on the power of recall, which may be difficult after a long period of time, and may also be affected by selective recall. Children are most likely to offer information that is reliable when talking about events that are part of or related to their own interests or part of their everyday experiences (Garbarino et al., 1978). Potential problems of recall will hopefully be lessened in this study because children will be requested to recall the most pleasant and memorable instances occurring in the last twenty-four hours.

It is written that children are more likely to engage in magical thinking, although they often perform well, and what they do remember is likely to be as

accurate as what an adult remembers (Garbarino et al., 1978).

The advantages of the self-report procedure over other behavioral-observation techniques are outlined by Witt, Cavell, Heffer, Carey and Martens (1988). The main advantage is that it can allow access to information that is otherwise inaccessible - thoughts and feelings that cannot be accurately observed externally.

#### Conclusion

Although there is no scientific data on highlights, the ideas discussed demonstrate that mental training with children has been beneficial to some extent. The need for further research in the affective domain of children has been encouraged (Summerlin, Hammett, & Payne, 1983; Band, 1990; Spirito, Overholser & Stark, 1989; Lewis, Siegel & Lewis, 1986; DeKlyen, 1976; DeLongis et al., 1988). Highlight activities used as an instrument for teaching children positive perspectives, will hopefully contribute to our knowledge about children's capacity to learn life skills through natural playful mediums.

## METHOD

### Subjects

Approximately 60 grade four students from 2 homeroom classes from an Ottawa region school will participate in this study. One class will make up the experimental group, and the other class will serve as a control group. Written parental consent will be obtained prior to the commencement of the study for all individuals involved.

### Procedure

The experimental group will attend 3 twenty minute highlight intervention program sessions per week for the duration of the 10 week study. The experimental group will record in a highlight intervention log book as well as participate in highlight activities, while the control group participates in normal classroom activities. The highlight intervention sessions will begin with instructions on the planned activities, followed by the students' participation in the explained highlight games, and discussions.

### Pre- experimental preparation

The researcher will be responsible for teaching the highlight intervention program. Assistants will also be involved in the teaching and interviewing of children. Prior to the beginning of the program, assistants will be provided with relevant readings and participate in a workshop that will outline the program objectives. This workshop and guidance will hopefully minimize the potential variation in teaching content and styles.

The basic intervention format will involve the Highlight Intervention Program (HIP) created for this study (St. Denis & Orlick, 1993), which requires students to participate in highlight activities and to record the good things that occur during their day in a Highlights Logbook (St. Denis & Orlick, 1993). The highlight log involves student's input to identify the positive experiences that they encounter each day, and to set target objectives to increase the frequency of highlight occurrences. (See Appendix B for Highlight Logbook).

### Implementation of the program

The HIP will be introduced to grade 4 students

as a supplement to part of a regular class.

During pre-test measures, a brief explanation and description of highlights will be discussed. Children in both the control and experimental group will be asked to write their highlights on pre-test highlight sheets on two separate occasions to determine the number of highlights that each child can acknowledge as occurring each day (See Appendix C for Pre-Post Highlight Sheets). Each child will also be asked on three separate occasions to complete 3 self report assessment scales: The Happy Face Likert Scale regarding overall happiness, The Cat Stress Likert Scale to explore childhood stress, and the Self- Esteem Scale to investigate feelings about self (See Appendix D for Self Report Assessment Scales).

The steps previously mentioned will help the researcher to develop a baseline measure as to the frequencies of highlights occurring daily. For the duration of the HIP sessions, children will be expected to participate in the highlight intervention activities and will be encouraged to record the highlights that they appreciate daily (See Appendix E for List of Highlight Intervention Activities).

During the first HIP session, the grade four experimental group will be told about the researchers, their future visits, and their participation in teaching the class.

In the final week of the program, post-test measures will be performed with both the control and experimental groups. The data gathering process performed during pre-test measures will be replicated. Children in the experimental group will also be interviewed during post-test measures. The data collected during pre-test and post-test sessions (highlight recordings and scales) will be compared and analyzed.

Logbooks will also be analyzed with respect to frequency and content of highlights over the duration of the study period. A feedback questionnaire will be distributed to teachers and parents for comments, observations and suggestions.

#### Design and Analysis

For the purpose of this study a pre-test, post-test design will be used. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses will be performed on the data. A descriptive and qualitative inductive content analysis

(Cote, Salmela, Baria & Russell, 1993) of the student HIP logbook responses, pre-test, post-test highlight sheets, will be conducted to determine the frequencies of highlights that children list daily, as well as the areas from which their highlights arise. This will also allow for the development of an inclusive highlight list for grade four students. A quantitative analysis will involve a two way ANOVA for comparison between the experimental and control group pre-test, post-test measures of highlight frequencies and a within group pre-test, post-test analysis of both the experimental and control groups. This will help determine whether the experimental children increased the frequency of highlights to a significant degree over the course of the study. Post-test experimental interviews will be used to elicit feedback from the children about their experience; as well as to discover whether highlights had some meaningful effect on their lives.

### Conclusion

In summary, although the research to date has been rather sparse, evidence is beginning to accumulate in support of the notion that mental training with

children may be an important asset in effective coping and positiveness in life. Further research is needed to elaborate the mechanisms involved when teaching children stress control and positive life perspectives. There is reason to believe that children may benefit from experiencing and fully appreciating highlights; but first, one must determine whether this concept can be taught to the children. Orlick states that positive life skills may enable children to grow with self-confidence and maintain a sense of perspective and positiveness throughout their lives (Orlick, 1993). Thus, it is possible that helping children to develop a positive perspective through highlights may be an important means of improving their ability to enjoy each day and to cope with stress during childhood.

## Appendix B

### List of Highlight Intervention Activities

#### Highlight Circle.

Each child is given the opportunity to share a highlight with the group (Orlick, 1993).

#### Highlight Picture Circle.

Each child is given the opportunity to colour a picture of a highlight, and then share their picture with the group.

#### Highlight Logbook Collage.

Children are encouraged to personalize logbooks by creating collages with magazine pictures, personal photographs etc...

#### Highlight Logbook Collage Circle.

In a circle children are each given the opportunity to share their collage with the group. They explain their choice of pictures, and what they mean to them.

#### Highlight Pictionary.

Children are divided into 2 groups. Each child is given the opportunity to draw a highlight on the board for their classmates to guess.

#### Highlight Group Pictionary.

In groups of four, children simultaneously draw a picture of a highlight at their desks. Once all completed, children focus on one picture and guess the highlight, then move on to another highlight picture to guess.

### Cooperative Highlight Egg Pass.

Children write a highlight on a small piece of paper and insert it into a plastic egg. In circle position, children pass the egg to the individual on their left each time the instructor says "pass". When instructor says "open", children read the highlight inside the egg that they are holding. Children are encouraged to close their eyes and imagine the highlight, feel it and think about whether it could be a highlight for them too. Children continue to listen to instructions and pass the eggs around the circle. Children will enjoy also guessing whose highlight they are reading.

### Highlight Hunt.

Children write one highlight on a normal piece of paper. They are then told to find as many people that experienced the same highlight - write all the names down on their paper. This game can be changed so that the children are trying to find people with different highlights. This is a way of sharing highlights, and learning about new ones.

### Highlight Area Scavenger Hunt.

Discussion of different highlight areas. Children are then ask to follow instructions on board. Instructor lists on board - find someone with a play highlight - someone with a relaxation highlight, etc.... Children scurry about getting names written down on their paper.

### Cooperative Highlight List.

Children are challenged to come up with as many highlights as they can. This is a cooperative effort and works well when children are in circle position. The children can be challenged each time to increase the frequency of highlights experienced by the group.

### Highlight Bag.

Each child is encouraged to write a highlight on a small piece of paper. All highlights are placed into a special highlight bag. This bag can be especially designed by the children or by the instructor. A joint effort is always good as well. This is again a cooperative group effort in that children are encouraged to increase their total number of highlights that they experience daily. This will work best if the instructor counts the number of highlights at the end of each day and praises the children for their great work. This bag will be left in the classroom should anyone want to add to it at any time. Should some children be having a bad day they can be encouraged to take from the highlight bag (Orlick, 1993).

### Highlight Goal Cards.

Children are encouraged to set their own goals as far as increasing the number of highlights that they experience daily, by making up personal goal cards (Orlick, 1993).

### Highlight Hilarious.

Children group up with as many people as they need to act out their highlight. Everyone is given the chance to discuss and practice

together. Then, the groups take turns acting out their highlight in front of the class and the other children guess the highlights.

#### Highlight Poems.

Children are given the opportunity to write a poem about their highlights or their feelings about highlights. The children who wish to read their poem to the class should be given the chance to share their ideas (see appendix I).

#### Spontaneous Highlight Stories.

Children are asked to think of a story involving as many highlights as they can possibly come up with. They should be reminded to look for the very simple life highlights as well as the bigger highlights that occur in their day. Children volunteer to tell their stories, while the others try to count the highlights mentioned.

#### Personal Highlight Games.

Children make up their own highlight games. They are encouraged to think of new ways to teach highlights to others. Some of the new games can be tried out by the class.

#### Trash - it.

This is an adapted form of the Tree - it concept (Orlick, 1993). Children write a lowlight on a piece of paper, and then are encouraged to trash - it. Lowlights are crumpled, stepped on, jumped on, chewed, ripped up and then thrown into a garbage can.

**Relaxation Tapes.**

To encourage children to experience a relaxation highlight and to teach them about relaxation children listen to several audio tapes (Spaghetti Toes, Your Own Special Place, Soaring, Floating on Clouds, Quiet Lake Etc...).

**Laughter Tapes.**

Children listened to a laughter tape. The aim of this activity was to get the children laughing so as to share a highlight together, and to encourage happiness.

**Other Activities and Discussions.**

Lowlights, treating others in positive ways, highlight discussions, stress discussions and positive ways of dealing with stressors, and logbook entries.

## Appendix C

### Pre/Post Test Procedure

A brief explanation of highlights was given to the children as follows: "Highlights are things that make you feel good, the things that make you feel happy during your day. Highlights might be something you did that made you smile, or something someone said that made you feel great".

On two separate days during the pre-test, experimental and control groups children filled out a highlight sheet which asked them, "Did anything happen today or yesterday that made you feel happy or good?" (see Appendix D). This served as a baseline measure with respect to the frequency of highlights. On this sheet they circled either Yes or No. If they circled "No" they were asked to turn their paper over and work quietly. If they answered "Yes", they were asked to write down their highlight(s). During post testing the children were again asked to fill out the same highlight sheets on two different occasions following exactly the same instructions and procedures.

Appendix D

Examples of Pre-Test and Post Test Sheets for Recording Highlights



Appendix E  
The Highlight Logbook



## Appendix F

Post Program Interview Protocol for Grade 4Experimental Students in Program

- 1a. How did you feel about the highlight/relaxation program?
- 1b. What did you like best? (if anything)? Why?
- 1c. What did you like least or not like? (if anything)? Why?
- 2a. Did you learn anything from the program, yes or no?
- 2b. If yes, what were the main things you learned?
3. What does a "highlight mean to you"?
4. Why are highlights important?
- 5a. Did you tell or teach anyone who was not in the highlight/relaxation program the things you learned or activities you did? Yes or no?
- 5b. If yes, who did you tell or teach?
- 5c. What did you tell or teach them?
6. If you are feeling stressed or worried about something, what are some things you can do to make yourself feel better?
7. Why is it difficult for some people to find highlights?
8. Do you think you have changed at all from what you learned in the highlight/relaxation program? (For example do you think you feel happier or better in any way)?
9. Do you think you will continue to look for highlights on your own now that the program is finished? Yes or no?
10. Do you have any comments about the program (good or bad)?

Appendix G  
Post Program Questionnaire for Parents of Children in  
Experimental Group

1. Did your child mention the highlight/relaxation program to you at home?
2. If yes, what did your child tell you about the program?
3. Did your child show you or teach you any of the activities? If yes, what did he/she show you and what did you think of the activities?
4. Do you think your child enjoyed the program? Why or why not?
5. Do you think the program was useful for your child? Why or why not?
6. Have you noticed any difference in attitude or behaviour since the program started, negative or positive?
7. Please comment on anything else related to the program.

Appendix H  
Program Questionnaire for Teachers of Children  
in Experimental Group

1. In general, what did you think of the highlight/relaxation program?
2. Have you noticed any carryover from the highlight program when were not in school? (For example, children talking about highlights, using relaxation techniques, imagery, or stress control skills)?
3. Do you think the program helped the children in any way?
4. Have you tried using any of the techniques (e.g. Looking for highlights, positive thinking, relaxation, imagery) with your class as a whole, with individual children, or with yourself?
5. Please comment on anything else related to the program (e.g. Things you liked, disliked, used, or suggestions for future programs).

Appendix I

Highlight Poem Written by a Grade Four Student

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- H - happy and good**
- I - it's never bad**
- G - great**
- H - happiness is the key**
- L - little things in life**
- I - it doesn't have to be big**
- G - good and fun**
- H - have them every day**
- T - the good things in life**
- S - super special**

Appendix J

Highlight Poem Written By Dr. Terry Orlick, 1993

## LIVING HIGHLIGHTS

The path to simple happiness and personal joy  
lies in living highlights.

The way to live more highlights  
is to bathe in simple joys.  
Simple joys that are all around you  
and within you.

Look closely and you will see them.  
Stretch out your arms and you will touch them.  
Open your mind and heart  
and embrace them.

The time for living highlights  
is now.  
The place for living highlights  
is now.

Seize this moment to live  
and appreciate life's simple joys.  
Go to them - Go with them.  
Open yourself to their magic.

Create your own opportunities.  
Walk forward in life  
with your eyes and heart open  
and your arms outstretched to the sky.

Terry Orlick

## Appendix K

Experimental Group Ratings on "Feelings about Self" Scale

<u>PRE</u>		<u>POST</u>
1.67	<	3.50
3.67	>	3.50
2.00	<	3.00
3.33	<	4.50
2.33	<	5.00
3.00	<	4.00
4.33	<	4.50
4.33	<	5.00
3.50	<	4.00
3.67	<	5.00
4.00	<	5.00
4.00	=	4.00
3.00	<	5.00
3.67	>	3.00
4.33	>	3.50
4.00	<	5.00
3.00	<	5.00
3.67	>	3.00
4.33	>	3.50
4.00	<	5.00
3.00	<	5.00
4.33	<	5.00
4.33	<	4.50
3.67	<	4.50