

## How US schoolkids launched a hotline to spread joy

**Level:** Elementary

### 1 Warmer

a. Which of these things can help you forget your worries and feel better? Rank them in order 1-8 with 1 being the most likely and 8 the least likely.

- \_\_\_\_\_ kittens and puppies
- \_\_\_\_\_ having some ice cream or cake
- \_\_\_\_\_ reading the news
- \_\_\_\_\_ young children laughing
- \_\_\_\_\_ doing sports
- \_\_\_\_\_ shopping for something nice
- \_\_\_\_\_ shouting and screaming
- \_\_\_\_\_ going for a long walk

b. Compare your lists.

### 2 Key words

a. Write the words from the wordpools next to the definitions below. Then find and highlight them in the article to read them in context.

advice

encouragement

frustrated

inspiration

viral

- enthusiasm; a new idea that helps you to do something \_\_\_\_\_  
(paragraph 1)
- tips and information that someone gives you to help you \_\_\_\_\_  
(paragraph 1)
- very popular and spreading very quickly on the internet \_\_\_\_\_  
(paragraph 1)
- feeling annoyed and impatient \_\_\_\_\_ (paragraph 2)
- words or actions that give someone confidence or hope \_\_\_\_\_  
(paragraph 2)

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complicated

experience

isolation

pep talk

remote learning

6. a friendly talk in which someone tells you to do something better \_\_\_\_\_  
(paragraph 2)
7. difficult to do, deal with, or understand \_\_\_\_\_ (paragraph 3)
8. the knowledge that you get from life and from being in a lot of different situations  
\_\_\_\_\_ (paragraph 6)
9. when you are learning but are not at school \_\_\_\_\_ (paragraph 7)
10. When you are not allowed to see other people because you are ill, you are in ...  
\_\_\_\_\_ (paragraph 7)

**b. Use some of the key words above to complete these sentences.**

1. The video went \_\_\_\_\_ in less than a week.
2. He got the \_\_\_\_\_ for his first book from his relationship with his first girlfriend.
3. In my \_\_\_\_\_, very intelligent people make terrible mistakes, too.
4. Unfortunately, the business is getting more and more \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The coach ran up and down the side of the football pitch, shouting \_\_\_\_\_ to his team.

## 'If you're sad, get a cookie': how US schoolkids launched a hotline to spread joy

**Level:** Elementary

**Matthew Cantor**

**12 March, 2022**

- 1 Elementary-school students in California have started a free hotline that gives inspiration and advice. The school's project has gone viral and gets thousands of calls an hour.
- 2 When you call the number, a cheerful voice says: "If you're feeling angry, frustrated or nervous, press one. If you need words of encouragement and life advice, press two. If you need a pep talk from kindergarteners, press three. If you need to hear kids laughing, press four."
- 3 I called the number and realized that life does not have to be complicated. Here are some of the students' tips:
  - 4 "If you're nervous, get your money and spend it on ice cream and shoes."  
"If you're frustrated, go to your bedroom and punch a pillow, or just scream outside."  
"If you're mad or frustrated, do what you want to do best or do flips on the trampoline."  
"If you're sad or angry, go get a cookie, a smoothie, or an ice cream."  
"You are OK."  
"Don't give up."  
"The world is a better place with you in it."
- 5 The project was started by Jessica Martin and Asherah Weiss, teachers at West Side Union Elementary School in Healdsburg. "We asked kids what they could say to help other people."
- 6 "We said to the kids: 'We've had some difficult years. You found ways to stay happy,'" Martin said. They asked the children to think of times when they felt frustrated and they got good advice. "So all of the advice comes from the kids and their own life experience."
- 7 The students know about the war in Ukraine, local wildfires, and the pandemic. After more than a year of remote learning, they understand the isolation of Covid. "I experienced home schooling and quarantine," said Natisse, a fifth-grader.
- 8 Rosalie, another fifth-grader, said it wasn't hard to come up with ideas. "It's good to say nice things to people," she said. A pink poster reads, "If you are angry, think positive thoughts." The yellow poster next to it reads, "Think of fun things."
- 9 Soon, the project went viral on social media and in the news. After two days, they got 500 calls an hour, and now they're getting 9,000 an hour.
- 10 Martin says she is "so happy for the kids": "They get to see how kind words can help millions of people."

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### 3 Understanding the article

a. Are these sentences True or False according to the article?

1. The article is about an advice hotline set up by an elementary school in California.
2. Callers to the hotline can get recorded advice from the school children, or they can listen to children laughing.
3. People who call the hotline have to pay a dollar every time they call.
4. They didn't think they would get so many calls.
5. The kids know about many of the difficult situations in the world such as the war in Ukraine, local wildfires, and the Covid pandemic.
6. The kids are not allowed to go to school so they get their lessons via computer.
7. News of the project went viral, and the hotline now gets thousands of calls every hour.
8. The author says that life is always very complicated.

### 4 Key language

a. Find American words in the article that have the same meaning as these British words. Write them into the table.

American English (AmE)	British English (BrE)
	biscuit
	primary school
	(school) year 6

b. Now draw lines to match these AE words with the BE words.

- | AmE             | BrE            |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. elevator     | a. crisps      |
| 2. sidewalk     | b. mobile      |
| 3. fall         | c. lift        |
| 4. cell         | d. flat        |
| 5. downtown     | e. holiday     |
| 6. potato chips | f. city centre |
| 7. apartment    | g. pavement    |
| 8. vacation     | h. autumn      |

c. Write other AmE–BrE word pairs that you know.

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### 5 Discussion

**a. Discuss these questions**

- Which pieces of advice from the children do you like best and why?
- Who do you call when you need some kind words?
- What do you do when you need to put more joy into your day?
- What else can people do to help spread joy in difficult times?

### 6 In your own words

- a. Think of a problem you have. Write it on a piece of paper.**
- b. Put the piece of paper into a bag.**
- c. Take a piece of paper from another student. Read the problem or challenge and think of some advice or nice words you could tell that person.**
- d. Read out the problems and give your advice. Use the expressions below.**

**Giving advice**

*If I were you, I'd ...*

*Why don't you ...?*

*It might be a good idea to ...*

*Perhaps you could ...*

- e. What was the best advice you heard?**