

# BIBLIOTHERAPY LESSON PLAN

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**SOCIAL SKILL: BEING OPTIMISTIC**  
**CASEL COMPETENCY: SELF-AWARENESS**

## BOOK INFORMATION

Book Title: Elmer  
Author: David McKee  
Publisher: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books  
Year: 1968  
ISBN Number: 0-688-09171-7  
Number of Pages: 30 pages  
Reading Level: K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade

## BOOK SYNOPSIS

Elmer doesn't look like all the other elephants in the jungle as he is covered in patches of beautiful colors. Because of his colorful appearance and joyous attitude, Elmer makes the other elephants feel happy and they love to be around him. However, Elmer becomes discouraged about his different appearance and decides to make himself look like all his elephant friends. He soon comes realize that it's okay to be different and that his friends like him the way he is. They celebrate together in a colorful and unique way.

## LESSON OBJECTIVE

Help students recognize how having a good attitude can make others happy as well.

## LESSON MATERIALS AND ADVANCED PREPARATION

Review the options for the activities (at the end of the lesson plan). Decide which option is best for your students.

### Happy Elephants

Materials: Elephant printouts (provided on page 3), crayons  
Preparation: Print out elephant outlines.

### Sharing Happy Memories

Materials: Paper and pencils  
Preparation: None needed.

## Happy Song

Materials: Paper and pencils

Preparation: Find a way to play Pharrell's song "Happy" for students (YouTube link provided in activity description).

### KEY VOCABULARY AND CONCEPTS

**Herd** - a large group of animals, especially hooved mammals, that live, feed, or migrate together or are kept together as livestock

**Happy** - satisfied, feeling or showing pleasure or contentment

**Patchwork** - pieces of fabric that are put together to make a quilt (often colorful); something that is composed of many different parts

### PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Show the cover of the book and ask students what they notice about this particular elephant. Explain that this is Elmer and unlike other gray elephants, he is made up of a patchwork of different colors. Like Elmer, our school is made up of a patchwork of different students. As individuals we are also a patchwork of various qualities and talents. We can use our unique qualities and talents to bring happiness to others and to bring happiness to ourselves. Encourage students to find ways throughout the book in which Elmer and his friends say or do things that bring happiness to themselves and others.

### POST READING DISCUSSION

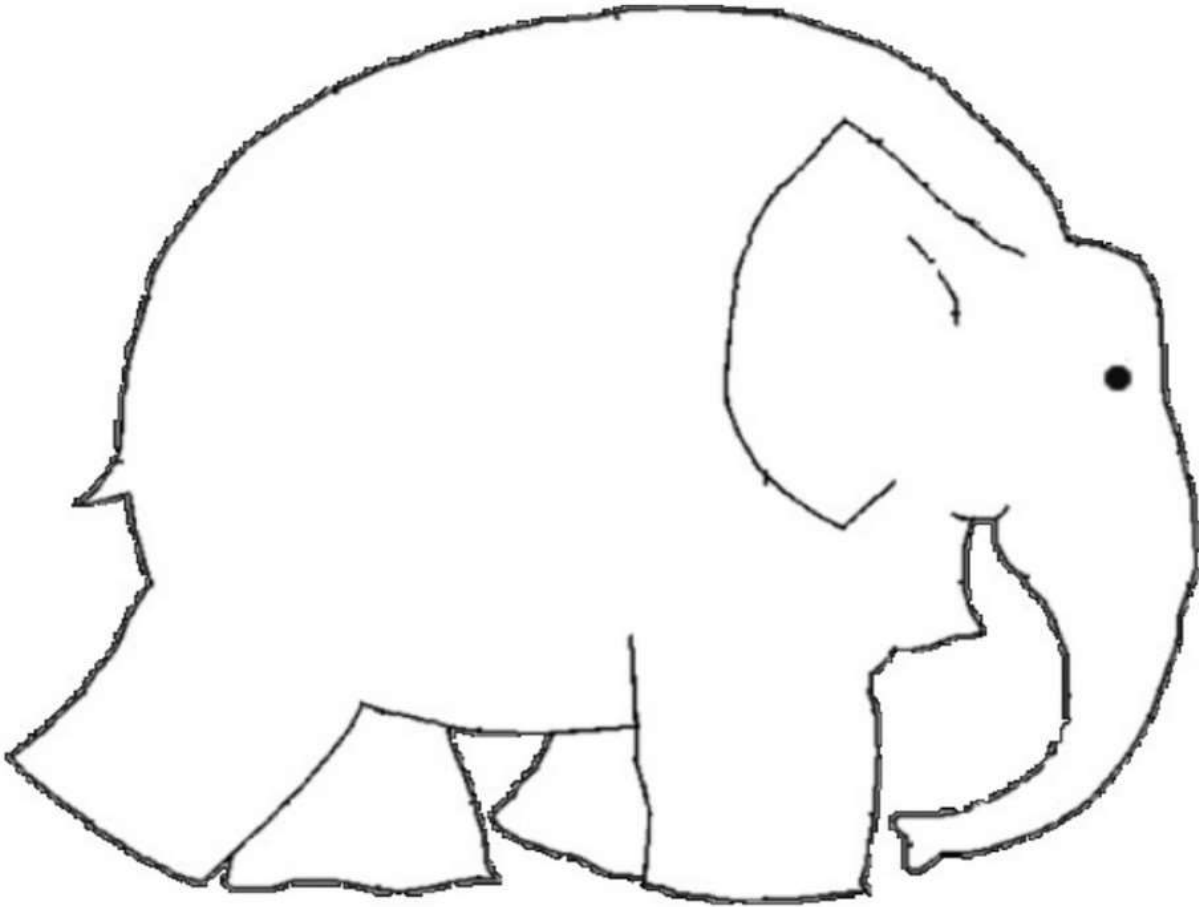
Ask the following questions:

- How did Elmer make his friends happy?
- How did his friends make Elmer happy?
- Why did Elmer feel like he needed to cover up his patchwork?
- What did Elmer learn when he went back to his friends and they didn't recognize him?
- What kinds of things can we do at home and school to bring happiness to those around us?
- What should we do when we are feeling sad?

### POST READING ACTIVITY: CHOOSE ONE OF THE ACTIVITIES

#### Happy Elephants (grades K-2)

Show students the last page of the book where the elephants each design themselves to look unique and colorful. Explain that there are unique qualities about each one of us that we can use to make others happy such as friendliness, being funny, and even having a big smile. Give each student an outline of an elephant (see the elephant template following this activity). Ask the students to color in their own unique elephant design. Then have each one of them write a quality about themselves below their elephant that makes them and others happy (you may have to help them write the quality). If there is enough time, have each student share their elephant and quality with the class. Then display the elephants around the classroom to remind students of their unique qualities that they can use to help spread happiness.



I like this about myself. This quality makes me and others happy:

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### **Sharing Happy Memories (all grades)**

As seen in the book, many of our happy memories include being with our friends or family. Encourage students to think of a happy memory they can share with the class. For younger students, ask them to draw a picture of that memory. For older students, have them write the memory as a brief story. When the students are finished, encourage a few of the students to share with the class, or “pair and share” (have the students talk about their memory with a partner). In closing, explain that we can think of these memories when we are feeling sad. These memories will help us to feel better and find hope.

### **Happy Song (grades 3-6)**

Play Pharrell’s song “Happy” for the class and as they are listening, encourage them to write down things that make them happy. Then, have the students get into groups of 4-5 and ask them to write a verse for the song including the things they wrote down that make them happy. Have each of the groups perform their verse for the class. This song activity will help everyone share the things that make them happy.

“Happy” song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6Sxv-sUYtM>

### **CLOSURE**

Hang the poster (provided) in the room.

“Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be.”  
— Abraham Lincoln

“Happiness is not something readymade. It comes from your own actions.”  
— Dalai Lama

A close-up photograph of a pink flower, likely a rose, with its center and petals visible. The image is used as a background for the text.

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