

What is a living thing?

By the end of the lesson the learners will be able to:

- Clearly distinguish between 'living' and 'non-living' things
- Name the essential elements needed for living things to stay alive
- Identify and compare basic psychological needs in humans and animals for mental health and happiness.

Materials and preparation

- Optional flashcards for the starter activity (sit down, stand up, crouch game).
- Ensure you are familiar with the *teacher's information sheet* before you go through the starter activity.
- Board and chalk/pen to write down questions and learners' answers during discussion activities.

Key words

living

Things that are now, or once were, alive. For something to be considered 'living', it must grow and develop, use energy, reproduce, be made of cells, respond to its environment, and adapt.

non-living

Anything that is no longer living, or was never alive.

organism

Any individual animal, plant, or single-celled life form.

cell

The smallest part of an organism which does things for this organism to stay alive.

psychological

Anything that has to do with the mind.

mental health

The state of how a living thing feels inside; how happy or unhappy they are.

Starter

Game
10 mins

Sit down, stand up, crouch

1. Before the activity, make sure learners know the difference between a living thing and a non-living thing. Use the definition provided in this lesson plan if needed, but do not go into too much detail yet as this is the object of the lesson.
2. Let the learners know that you will call out a series of items. Learners should **stand up** if they think the item is a **living thing**, **sit down** if they think it's a **non-living thing**, and **crouch** if they are **not sure** (or if they think it is both).
3. Certain items may provoke debate, which you should feel confident about if you refer to the teacher's information sheet. If you prefer to show flashcards as you call out each item, make sure you print them beforehand.
4. Items to be called out: a flower, a cloud, an onion, a doll, planet Earth, a beetle, a tree, an egg, a carrot, a phone, water, a mushroom, a dinosaur, a rock, the sky, a banana, mud, the sun, grass, a seashell, a robot, a child.

Main activity

Class discussion 1
10 mins

1. Ask learners the following question:

What do human beings need to stay alive?

2. Write learners' various answers on the board. If learners give you a need which isn't essential for our survival, place it in a different column.
3. Essential needs should be oxygen, food, water and shelter. You may also consider the right temperature and the sun.
4. Now ask learners to get into groups of four and ask each group to write a list of essential needs for the item they will get given. (Only one item per group; you can ask several groups the same question if needed).

Group work
10 mins

Group 1: What do plants need to stay alive?

Group 2: What do ants need to stay alive?

Group 3: What do birds need to stay alive?

Group 4: What do donkeys need to stay alive?

Group 5: What do dogs need to stay alive?

Group 6: What does grass need to stay alive?

Groups who finish their lists first should rank the essential needs they wrote in order of importance. This activity has no right or wrong answer, it is just a way for learners to realise that all the needs mentioned are equally important to stay alive.

Feedback
10 mins

Ask each group to read their list and go over misconceptions of what really constitutes an essential need.

Class discussion 2
10 mins

5. Ask learners the following questions:

- If all your essential needs were met, would that make you happy?
- Do you need anything else to be happy?

Write a list on the board of the extra items/concepts mentioned by learners (football, toys, friends, phone, etc...)

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This list might complete the previous list written during class discussion 1.

6. Explain that these 'extra' needs are important for learners' mental health (for their happiness).

7. Ask the group the following question:

What do you think different animals need for their mental health?

Learners should refer to the list on the board and tick the items that are in common with children (playing, spending time with family and friends, resting, etc..)

Plenary

Drawing
10 mins

Learners should choose an animal and draw what the animal of their choice needs to stay alive and happy. They can finish their drawing at home.

Information for the teacher

a flower

living

It grows, uses energy, reproduces, is made of cells, responds to its environment, and adapts. It still takes up water when it is cut.

a cloud

non-living

Clouds don't grow, they aren't made of cells, don't reproduce etc...

an onion

living

It grows, uses energy, reproduces, is made of cells etc...

non-living

When it is picked from the ground, although it might grow again if it is planted back in the ground.

a doll

non-living

Dolls are made from plastic or other material and are not alive.

planet Earth

non-living

Although it contains all life, the Earth itself is not alive.

a tree

living

It grows, uses energy, reproduces, is made of cells etc...

an egg

living

It is a single living cell (ovum) waiting to be fertilized by a sperm cell. The egg remains alive for up to three weeks after the hen has released it.

non-living

If the egg is past this three-week timeline, it is unfertilised, and non-living biomatter

a carrot

living

It grows, uses energy, reproduces, is made of cells etc...

non-living

When it is picked from the ground, although like a onion, it might grow again if it is planted back in the ground.

a phone	non-living	Mobile phones don't grow, they aren't made of cells, don't reproduce. They are made from plastic and metals.
a banana	living	As long as it is attached to the tree. it grows, uses energy, reproduces, is made of cells, responds to its environment, and adapts.
	non-living	As soon as it is detached from the tree.
mud	non-living	Mud (or earth) may contain many living organisms such as worms and bacteria, but it itself is not alive.
the sun	non-living	The sun is an enormous ball of hot plasma. While it provides the energy for almost all life on earth, it itself is not alive.
grass	living	It grows, uses energy, reproduces, is made of cells, and responds to its environment.
snail shell	living	If it is attached to the snail because it's the snail's calcium that grows and develops.
	non-living	When the snail dies the shell stops growing.
a robot	non-living	It doesn't grow, it isn't made of cells, doesn't reproduce etc...
a mushroom	living	It grows, uses energy, reproduces, is made of cells, and responds to its environment.
	non-living	As soon as it is picked it cannot use the nutrients provided by the soil anymore.
a dinosaur	non-living	It grew, used energy, reproduced, was made of cells until they went extinct 65 million years ago.
a rock	non-living	It doesn't grow, it isn't made of cells, doesn't reproduce etc...
the sky	non-living	It doesn't grow, it isn't made of cells, doesn't reproduce etc...

water

non-living

Water forms the fluids inside living beings, but is not itself alive.