

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Focus on Optimism

Overview:

During this time, we all have experienced many ups and downs. Research reveals that individuals are positive thinkers, are born with that characteristic. However, some people also believe it can be taught to others. The lesson and activity provide techniques to help your child develop positive and optimistic thinking.

Objectives:

Your child will learn strategies for transforming their view to increase optimism.

Child Goals:

I can change my view to increase optimism.

Vocabulary: optimism, positive thinking

Learn- 5 minutes

It is important to focus on the positive when remaining optimistic to situations. Shift your thoughts to focus on the solution and not the problem. You can decide to be hopeful and have an open mind.

Review and Discuss:

- **Concentrate on the Answer.** Don't concentrate on the problem but concentrate on the solution.
- **Concentrate on this situation not lasting forever.** Focus on the fact that uncomfortable situations won't last forever.
- **Concentrate on next steps.** Don't get stuck on why something took place but shift your focus to your next steps.
- **Concentrate on Yes I Can.** Shift your thoughts from a "I can't" mindset to an "I can" mindset.

Practice-15 minutes

Being optimistic is having hope or assurance about the future or the successful outcome of something occurring. It is important to concentrate on options and not make excuses or reasons why something happened that you felt was challenging. Instead, concentrate on the options you have and think positively about the future.

Discussion questions:

- What does it mean to be positive or optimistic?
- How have you approached a challenging situation in a positive way in the past?
- What techniques do you use to be optimistic?
- Describe a time when it was hard for you to be positive or optimistic?

Activity

Focus on Optimism Challenge

Pessimistic Perspective Cards

You were messing around with some friends and dropped your phone, and it shattered. You don't have money for a new one and there's no way your parents will pay for new one. You think your social life will be ruined.

A friend has been acting distant and doesn't want to hang out with you. You don't know what their problem is, but you think you must have done something wrong.

You failed a history test. Now you think that you will never understand the material and will fail the class.

A sibling posted a goofy picture of you online without your permission. All you can think about is how embarrassing it is and what everyone will say about it.

You can't go to the movies with your friends on Friday night because you have stay home with your little sister. You know your night is going to be a total bust and your friends are going to have a great time.

The doctor thinks that you might be allergic to dairy products. All your favorite foods have dairy in them. No more ice cream. No more pizza. This will be awful.

Your mom just lost her job and is really stressed out. All you can think about is how rough it's going to be at home now.

Your best friend just told you that they're moving across the country. All you can think about is how lonely you'll be and how awful school is going to be without them.

You and your friends have tickets to a concert tonight, but it's been cancelled. All you can think about is how much money you wasted and how you will never be able to see this band.

Your significant other broke up with you. Even though you knew it was coming, all you can think about is how awkward it will be at school for the rest of the year.

Optimistic Focus Options

Optimistic Focus

Focus on the Solution

Rather than focusing on what went wrong, brainstorm possible solutions.

Focus on the Situation as Temporary

Remind yourself that most situations don't last forever. Even if what's happened is permanent, your feelings will change or soften over time.

Focus on What to Do Next

Think about your next possible steps. Take action and more forward!

Focus on Options

Instead of making excuses or thinking about reasons why something happened, think of what options are available to you.

Focus on Positive Thoughts

Catch the negative thoughts in your head and reframe them to positive ones. Think about what good might come from the bad situation.

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Deeper Dive 20 minutes

The Focus on Optimism activity encourages your child to rehearse difficult situations with optimism.

Provide your child with the Focus on Optimism Activity

Review the Pessimistic Perspective Cards and reflect on the negative situation described. Then review the Optimistic Focus Options.

Select an Optimistic Focus Option that you think would be a reasonable reaction to the Pessimistic Perspective. Write down how you would change the Pessimistic Perspective with optimism.

Tip: Encourage your child to reflect on the importance of remaining optimistic, even when things are difficult. Share the importance of shifting from an “I can’t” mindset to an “I can” mindset.