

## Title: **Choosing Optimism**

Jennifer Uhlman	Grade 8 English Language Arts and Healthy Living
Lesson Goals:	Students will define optimistic and pessimistic mindsets used to think about, react to, and approach a problem. Students will also practice strategies that help them to develop and maintain optimism in their own lives.
Outcomes Targeted:	ELA- 2.1 contribute to small-group and whole-group discussion 3.2- demonstrate a respect for others by developing effective ways to express personal opinions such that they reflect sensitivity to others including differences in culture and language. HL- 8.6- identify healthy and unhealthy relationships and demonstrate skills to communicate thoughts and feelings in a positive, supportive manner
I Can Statement:	I can train my brain to have an optimistic perspective which will make it easier for me to learn. Optimistic thinking primes my brain to be ready to focus and make more room for new information to be absorbed and new ideas to stretch their wings. It will also strengthen my perspective-taking skills and accept viewpoints different from my own.
Key Vocabulary and Skills:	Optimistic, Pessimistic
Material Needed:	paper . pencils, iPads, chart paper, markers....a big smile!

### **Lesson:**

#### I. Introduction (Teacher organized)

Reiterate the previous lesson on the power on positive thinking and the memoirs that the students wrote and shared

Explain to students that choosing to view life optimistically can increase our brain capacity. It relaxes our amygdala, creates chemical balance in our brains, and allows our prefrontal cortex to take charge. In this frame of mind, we learn that we can make much better choices than if we take a negative or pessimistic approach, which effectively shuts down our higher level thinking.

Read the information sheet Optimism- A learned Skill for Success

<http://msuhlman.weebly.com/uploads/2/4/8/2/24828726/optimism.pdf>

Time Allotted: 5-10 minutes

#### II. Guided Learning (Teacher/student collaboration)

- 1) Relay to students that optimism doesn't mean pretending that everything is great when it is not. Create a

chart with 3 rows on the board. Unrealistic, Optimistic, and Pessimistic. Brainstorm with the students some situations that might cause students to worry. Take one of those situations and model the 3 kinds of responses for the class.

Example: an upcoming test Unrealistic- I'll do great, I never need to study

Optimistic- I'll give it my best effort and get help if I need it. I'm confident I will be prepared

Pessimistic- There's no point in studying; I'll just fail anyway-I always do  
Have the students generate the 3 different responses for a different situation.

Time Allotted: 15-20 minutes

### III. Collaborative Learning (Student focused activity)

#### Comedy Sketch

Work with a partner or small group to come up with a funny scene that involves a character who is unrealistically optimistic or very pessimistic. The humor is in the character's inability to see the situation realistically. Example: The tiny mouse that wants to fight the elephant or the elephant being scared of the mouse is funny. Have fun and make us laugh!

\*\*One way to help students become more objective in their thinking is to show the humor in extreme thinking. Pessimistic thinking and unrealistic thinking are both very self-serious and exposing them to humor helps to deflate them. Laughter calms the amygdala and releases the prefrontal cortex from the grip of emotion. Being able to laugh at oneself is a great remedy for distorted thinking.

Time Allotted: remainder of class and time the following class to finish and present sketches.

### IV. Grand Finale

After students have presented their comedy sketches, leave them with the following for "homework". Start a page with the words "Happiness is....." Make a list of as many things that you can think of. Keep the list handy and add to it when something new arises. Return to that list whenever you need a mood boost.

Assessment and Evaluation: Participation and assignment completion

Adaptations and IPPs: Noted students are able to work in a different space if required (resource room)

