



Resilience & Learned Optimism: Critical Thinking & Discussion Questions

Do you consider yourself an optimistic person or a pessimistic person? Which outlook do you think is associated more with happiness and success in life?

Resilience means “the ability to bounce back after a setback or stressor.” What are some of the stressors in your life? How do you attempt to cope with them?

What are some positive coping strategies for dealing with life’s stressors? Make a list of positive coping techniques with your classmates.

Do you ever “listen” to some of the things that you say to yourself (especially when things are going badly) ? Most people would not talk to other people as harshly as they speak to themselves. What if you were to speak to yourself with as much kindness as you would show to your best friend? How might that improve your mood and outlook?

Who are some optimistic people that you know? Do you find yourself wanting to spend time more with optimistic or pessimistic people? Why?

Have you ever failed a test? One teacher suggested that the word “FAIL” means: First Attempt in Learning. How can you bounce back from having failed a test?

“Resilient people tend to be more successful in life.” Why do you think that is?

What personal qualities do you possess that you are most happy about? What personal qualities would you like to work to improve?

The three traits of Learned Optimism are Temporary, Impersonal, and Specific. Why is it helpful to think of events in these terms:

Temporary –

Impersonal –

Specific –



The opposite of Learned Optimism (Pessimism), involves thinking in ways that are Personal, Permanent, and Pervasive. How is it unhelpful to think in ways that are:

Personal –

Permanent –

Pervasive –

Have you ever caught yourself thinking in any of these ways before? Do you every stop to think about the thoughts that you are thinking?

Do you think that the strategies of Learned Optimism (disputing your most catastrophic self-talk by emphasizing that situations are temporary, not personal, and specific) can help you to cope with disappointing events better?

What questions do you have about Learned Optimism? Do you think there is a relationship between pessimism and depression? What about the relationship between optimism and depression?

Activities

Do you think you're good at coping with difficult situations and overcoming challenges?

How would you rate yourself now, from 1 (poor) to 5 (great) in terms of your resiliency?

Here is a good online quiz you can take to get a more accurate measurement:

<https://resiliencyquiz.com/index.shtml>

Are you an optimist or a pessimist? Take the quiz:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/how-help-friend/201603/are-you-optimist-or-pessimist>