

Resilience & Learned Optimism: K-8

Activities

K-2

Read *The Little Engine That Could*. What did the Little Engine say over and over again? Why would this phrase help you when something is hard?

Invite students to take a role in a short role-playing exercise. After, ask the remaining students the suggested questions.

Teacher to Student 1: What do you act like when you give up? What kind of face do you make? Share some words that let your friends know that you are giving up.

Teacher to Student 2: Pretend that although you wanted to give up, you changed your mind. What expressions show your friends that you have changed your mind and no longer want to give up.

Teacher to Student 3: Imagine losing a game. But instead of giving up, you are excited to try again. What expressions would your friends see on your face? What does it look like to keep trying?

To the class: Raise your hand if you have ever wanted to give up.

Suggested questions:

What emotions did you feel in that moment (disappointment, sadness, frustration, etc.)? What emotions did you see on Student 1's face or in their body language?

How did you know that Student 2 changed their mind and no longer wanted to give up?

What thoughts did Student 3 have that made them never give up? How did they feel about themselves because they kept trying?

3-5

1) Go around the room and have students volunteer to share a time where they gave up.

2) Ask various students to answer:

What would it have taken not to give up?

Since thoughts are like seeds, and challenges will always come, what thoughts can they plant in their minds?

3) On a notecard, have students write down one thing they learned that will help them practice optimism and become more resilient. If possible, have them tape this notecard somewhere on their desk or on a designated place in the classroom.

6-8

This 3-part activity strengthens higher level understanding, analysis, and communication skills. In #2, only a few need to offer an answer, before going to the next prompt.

1) Gather students in groups of 3-4. Have them answer the following questions, which will then be shared with the whole class.

Why is it easy for a person to give up when they face a challenge?

How do setbacks make us feel? Think of Michael Jordan, Thomas Edison, or Simone Biles. What did it take for them to overcome normal emotions like disappointment?

2) After each group shares their answers, allow students to raise their hands to answer any of the following prompts:

Why are our thoughts powerful? How do thoughts resolve emotions like disappointment or anger?

Name a famous person or someone they know who has reached their goal without optimism and resilience.

3) Individual take-away. Have students take out a piece of paper, in the center they should write:

One take-away from the activity

A positive thought (seed) about themselves to plant into their minds (gardens).

A difficult situation they are encountering (assignment, relationship, etc.) and write an optimistic way of thinking about that situation.

Possible Homework Assignments:

- 1) Think of something you do well, a game you won, or an assignment on which you got a good grade. Imagine that tomorrow you do something poorly. Write a few sentences telling what you can do to demonstrate Learned Optimism and Resilience.
- 2) 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>

- 3) 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>