

Module 7: Positive Mindset (Gratitude, Mindfulness, and Hope)



Subject: Psychological Well-being

Duration of Unit: 2 classes (45 min each)

Central Message: Habits of thinking, including gratitude, savoring, mindfulness, and optimism, are strongly correlated with happiness.



LEARNING GOALS

Enduring Understandings:

- We can experience the Pleasant Life if we cultivate gratitude about the past, savor and are mindful about the present, and feel hope and optimism about the future.
- Mindfulness is a powerful way to reduce anxiety and improve mental wellness and ability to cope with stress.

Essential Questions:

- What are some of the ways we can express gratitude towards others?
- How is mindfulness related to happiness?
- Are we born optimistic or pessimistic? Can optimism be learned?

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- Be able to identify how they can relate to the past, present, and the future in ways that cultivate positive emotions and well-being.
- Provide concrete examples illustrating how positive emotions can contribute to personal success and happiness as well as more fruitful relationships.

LESSON PLAN OUTLINE

Day 1 Main Topic – Gratitude about the past

- **Challenge Assignment Debrief:** Break students into pairs. Give each member of the pair five minutes to talk about their experience with the strengths challenge assignment. Some prompts:
 - Whom did they interview?
 - Were they surprised by something?
 - What did they learn from the experience? (10 mins)
- **Watch the video on Positive Mindset** (10 mins)
- **Video Debrief:** Facilitate a class discussion about the video. Some prompts:
 - General reflection
 - Which one of the three mindsets are you best at practicing?
- **Class Activity**
 - Write down three things that you feel grateful about in general
 - Or, write down three things you experienced today that you feel grateful about. They can be tiny things!
 - Ask students to volunteer their reflections (10 mins)
- **Watch the Science of Happiness video on gratitude**
<https://youtu.be/oHv6vTKD6lg>
(Remind students that the focus of this class is gratitude, and that Seligman's experiments on gratitude provided much of the inspiration behind his work on the field of Positive Psychology). (10 mins)
- **Assignment:** Write a letter / message expressing gratitude to a person who has changed your life in a positive way and may not know it. If possible, read the letter out loud to the recipient, in person or over the phone or video conference; if this is not possible, read the letter to a close friend or relative. It's perfectly OK to mention that you are doing this as an assignment, but don't forget to emphasize that they were the person that came to mind!
Write notes on the following questions:
 - How did the message recipient react?

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- How did you feel during and after the experience?
- Did it change your relationship somehow?

Day 2 Main Topic – Savoring the moment, cultivating optimism

- **Assignment Debrief:** Have students break into pairs and share their letters of gratitude as well as their answers to the assignment questions. (10 mins)
- **Group Activity:** When students arrive in the classroom, lead them in a brief breathing exercise or meditation. Then, have them spend a few minutes writing in their journals about how they feel. (10 min)
- **Class Discussion:**
 - Ask students what they thought was the main point of the story about the farmer and the tigers in the Positive Mindset video.
 - Ask the class, which of the two tigers is trying to eat you up? Or both, or none? (Volunteers only) (5 mins)
- **In-Class Assignment:** Ask students to write about the following:
 - Are negative emotions affecting their concentration in class? If so, how can they improve their focus?
 - Two or three ways that they can incorporate mindfulness into their daily lives
 - goals for how they will do this over the semester (10 mins)

Hope and Optimism about the Future

- **Group Discussion:** Have students reflect in their journals on whether they identify as a pessimist or an optimist. Then, facilitate a group discussion: “Are people born or raised as pessimistic or optimistic? In what ways can we cultivate optimism in our lives?” Ask students how they might cultivate habits of optimistic thinking. (10 mins). Note: One way to do this is by setting goals that inspire us, which we are doing in the following assignment.
- **Assignment:** Mapping out your *Ikigai*
Learn about the Japanese concept of *Ikigai* (“reason to live”) and how to practice it through this wonderful page by Films for Action:
<https://www.filmsforaction.org/articles/ikigai-finding-your-reason-for-being/>

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- Find a friend, colleague, or family member that is interested in doing this reflection activity with you
- Each spend 10 minutes filling out the Ikigai 'flower'
- Switch your Ikigai flowers and add things your friend may have missed such as skills or strengths that you feel they have
- Each take 5 minutes to share your reflections based on the Ikigai exercise

- Deepen your reflections by discussing the following:
 - Which of these aspects of your Ikigai are currently being fulfilled in your work or other activities?
 - What can you do to find more meaning and purpose in your existing activities?
 - What can you pursue outside of your existing work and activities that is closer to your Ikigai?

ASSESSMENT

Summative Assessment:

- Students submit their **Weekly Happiness Habits Journal** worksheet and include their Gratitude, Mindfulness, and Hope goals along with all previous others.