

Optimism

Syllables
op•ti•mism

Pronunciation
op-tuh-miz-uhm

Definition

Expecting that everything will turn out well. Optimism means believing that positive results are likely.

*(Smiling as they waited to hear the referee's judgment, the team was filled with **optimism** and hope.)*

Simply put: Keeping your sunny side up.

Related Terms

Confident: Self-assured.

Fundamental Question:

How can I make myself see the half empty glass as half full?

Students will investigate the idea that while children are born with different temperaments, optimism and pessimism are learned rather than in-born. Optimists have the confidence to deal with situations.

Objectives

Each student will:

1. Brainstorm a list of real-life challenges, problems, and adversities;
2. Assume the role of an optimist or pessimist as assigned and role play a response to one or more of the situations; and
3. Discuss and evaluate the effectiveness of the responses.

Before you begin

- Prepare six index cards as noted in the procedure below; and
- Print out a copy of *There's Good News and Bad News* for each student.

Suggested Sidebars:

Speaking of Optimism (Discussion Idea)

Discuss: Optimists tend to do better in school and social situations than do pessimists. They tend to be healthier, too. Why do you think this is so?

Taking It to the Next Level

Optimists tend to see themselves as active participants in the future. They make real differences in their communities. How can you begin to participate in the future by helping your own community today? Put your ideas into practice.

Optimism

Procedure

1. Invite two children to stand at the front of the room. Say: “Optimists usually think of difficult events as being temporary (for the time being).” Have one child read aloud a card on which you have written “Nobody likes me.” Have the other read aloud a card that says “Sometimes it takes a while to find a friend.” Ask: “Which one of these two statements was more likely said by someone who is an optimist? How do you know that the optimistic speaker thinks that the situation is temporary?”
2. Say: “Optimists usually think of difficult situations as being specific (or limited to that situation).” Have one child read aloud a card on which you have written “I need to sharpen my painting skills.” Have the other read aloud a card that says “I can’t do art.” Ask: “Which one of these two statements was more likely said by someone who is an optimist? How do you know that the optimistic speaker thinks that the situation is specific?”
3. Say: “Optimists usually understand their roles in situations and can take responsibility for their actions. Have one child read aloud a card on which you have written “I got a D on my test because I didn’t study.” Have the other read aloud a card that says “I got a D on my test because I’m stupid.” Ask: “Which one of these two statements was more likely said by someone who is an optimist? How do you know that the optimistic speaker understood responsibility?” (Invite your readers to return to their seats.)
4. Say: “Let’s brainstorm a list of some real-life challenges that might be handled differently by optimists and pessimists. I’ll start. Someone started a rumor about you.” (Record this and the other suggestions on the board.)
5. Divide the class into pairs. Ask each pair to determine which child will play the role of optimist, and which will play the role of pessimist. Assign each pair a situation from the board. Have the pairs role play possible responses to the situation.
6. Have each pair share its “skit” with the class. Follow each with a discussion, allowing the class to evaluate the effectiveness of the responses to the problem and to make suggestions for other optimistic responses.
7. **Follow Up:** Distribute the *There’s Good News and Bad News* sheets and assist your students in completing them.

Name _____

Reminder: Optimism means expecting that everything will turn out well.

There's Good News and Bad News

Finish this page to create a funny story.

The good news is: I don't have to eat Brussel sprouts ever again.

The bad news is: That's because I'm allergic to them.

The good news is: My mom found a replacement for them.

The bad news is: It's okra!

The good news is:

The bad news is:

The good news is:

The bad news is:

The good news is:

The bad news is:

The good news is:

The bad news is:

The good news is:

The bad news is:

But the very best news is:

Today's Thought: *I can't change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination.* — **Jimmy Dean, actor**