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LESSON **1**

# DEVELOPING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

## **A G E N D A**

- Starter
- Attitude Power
- Positive Versus Negative
- Make a Plan
- Conclusion
- Questions for Assessment

### **Objectives**

Students will recognize the power of their attitudes by participating in a demonstration.

Students will identify positive and negative attitudes and their consequences.

Students will analyze the effects of positive and negative environments.

### **Materials Needed**

- Pencils and paper (Part I)
- Poster paper, markers/crayons, and various art supplies (e.g., glitter, glue, stickers) (Part III)

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**Starter** (5 minutes)

Begin class differently by welcoming students with a series of negative, complaining statements like the following:

You know, it took me almost twice as long as usual to get here today. The traffic was so slow that I barely made it on time. And then people kept stopping me to ask questions! You guys just have no idea what I go through to get here every day. Well, I guess we should get started. I'm really not prepared because my dog ate my lesson plan, but it doesn't really matter anyway. You might not even notice if I have a plan or not.

Ask students to describe how they feel about what you said. Encourage them to describe the messages sent by your body language and tone of voice, and the effect your words had on their image of you and their expectations for today's class.

Say, "See how attitude affects things? A negative attitude can ruin your day! We're going to talk about attitude today because attitude affects everything you do and all of the people around you."

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**Part I Attitude Power** (15 minutes)

*Purpose:* Students create positive and negative environments in order to become aware of the power of their attitudes.

**1. STUDENTS PREPARE FOR THE ACTIVITY.**

Explain to students that they are going to experience how their attitudes can affect their ability to succeed. To begin, ask two volunteers to wait outside the classroom. Then, divide the class into two teams—the "Cans" and the "Cannots."

Remind students that attitude is a state of mind. Explain that each team is going to create an atmosphere that will affect someone's state of mind. Tell students that the two volunteers will be given one minute to write all of the words they can think of that begin with the letter "B."

**2. STUDENTS CREATE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENTS.**

Tell the "Cans" that their task is to create a positive environment in order to create a positive attitude in one of the volunteers. Ask if anyone can explain how this might be done. (*Students might respond: making supportive, encouraging comments such as, "You can do it! Lots of words begin with B! Good word!" They will speak with enthusiasm, sincerity, and energy.*)

Tell the "Cannots" that their task is to create a negative environment in order to create a negative attitude in the other volunteer. Ask if anyone can suggest how this might be done. (*Students might respond: making discouraging*

*comments such as, “B is a hard letter! There are hardly any words that begin with B! This is impossible!” They will speak in whiny, complaining tones of voice.)* Tell the “Cannots” that they should not use insults during the activity; they should instead focus on making the task seem difficult.

Ask the volunteers to come into the room. Give each a pencil and a sheet of paper, and have each sit with one of the teams. Explain that the volunteers have one minute to write as many words as possible that begin with the letter B.

### 3. STUDENTS REFLECT ON THEIR EXPERIENCES.

Guide students to draw conclusions after completing this exercise by asking questions such as the following:

- How many words did each team produce?
- Which team was more successful? Why do you think that team was more successful?
- Volunteers, how did your teammates affect your thinking and your ability to succeed?

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## Part II Positive Versus Negative (15 minutes)

*Purpose:* Students identify positive and negative attitudes and their consequences.

### 1. STUDENTS EXPLORE THE CONCEPTS OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ATTITUDES.

Explain to students that an attitude is a way of acting or behaving that shows what someone is thinking or feeling. It is a state of mind. Write the word and its definitions on the board. (Merriam-Webster defines “attitude” as a “state of readiness to respond in a characteristic way to an object, concept, or situation.”)

Prompt students with questions and comments to explore the idea that in addition to genuine attitudes, people can sometimes “affect” or “put on” different attitudes. Ask students why they think people might do this.

*(Students might respond: to make others think a certain way about them, to pretend to be something they are not.)*

### 2. STUDENTS IDENTIFY ATTITUDES.

Ask students to give examples of different attitudes that people can have. Invite volunteers to write ideas on the board. Monitor the list. Through questions and comments, guide students to make observations about the kinds of attitudes that are listed. If the list reflects mostly negative attitudes, invite students to add some positive ones. Your list might include such words as “friendly,” “unfriendly,” “bored,” “enthusiastic,” “tough,” “cool,” “superior,” or “fun.”

Go back over the list and have students decide whether each attitude is either positive or negative. Place a plus or minus sign after each word to reflect students' responses. If students disagree on whether an attitude is positive or negative, allow them to support their positions with reasons or examples.

### 3. STUDENTS IDENTIFY THE CONSEQUENCES OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ATTITUDES.

To focus the discussion on the consequences of positive attitudes, ask questions such as the following:

- How do you think the volunteer assigned to the “Cans” group felt? (*Students might respond: good, successful, powerful, assertive.*)
- Was the volunteer’s attitude positive or negative at this point? (*Students should respond that it was positive.*)
- What do you think enabled the volunteer to have and project a positive attitude? (*Students might respond: focusing on his or her strengths, having confidence in his or her ability to succeed, feeling energetic and upbeat.*)
- How do you usually react to people who have positive attitudes? (*Students might respond: like them more, have more confidence in them.*)
- How do you think people react to you when you have a positive attitude?

Repeat the questions, this time focusing on the consequences of negative attitudes.

Conclude the discussion by explaining that attitudes are powerful; they make things happen. Tell students that a positive attitude motivates people and increases their ability to succeed.

Lead students to the understanding that in order to keep a positive attitude, they should focus on their strengths and have confidence in their ability to succeed.

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## Part III Make a Plan (15 minutes)

*Purpose:* Students create plans for transforming their negative attitudes.

### 1. STUDENTS BRAINSTORM WAYS TO POSITIVELY RESPOND TO SITUATIONS.

Draw a three-column chart on the board.

As a class, brainstorm situations in which students might exhibit a negative attitude. (*Students might respond: while studying for a test, after losing a game, after being scolded by a parent.*) Write their suggestions in the first column on the board. Then, have students identify the negative attitudes they might have toward these situations. Write these suggestions in the second column.

Discuss the situations students listed. Explain to students that, more often than not, it's a negative response to a stressful situation that brings about the most harm. Have students identify how having a negative attitude can make the situations they identified worse. (*Students might respond: having a negative attitude while studying for a test might affect their ability to retain the knowledge, having a negative attitude after losing a game might cause them to avoid playing the game in the future.*)

Tell students that it is important to maintain a positive attitude. As a class, brainstorm techniques for developing a positive attitude. Be sure to include the following:

- Make encouraging affirmations, like “I can handle this” or “I’m ready for this test.”
- Write down the things for which you are grateful.
- Focus on the first step you have to take, instead of worrying about the larger goal.
- Share your fears with someone you trust, and ask him or her for reassurance.
- Listen to positive music.

Have students identify ways they can respond more positively to the situations in the first column. Write their suggestions in the last column on the board.

## 2. STUDENTS CREATE THEIR OWN PLANS FOR POSITIVELY RESPONDING TO SITUATIONS.

Distribute poster paper, markers/crayons, and art supplies to each student. Have students draw three columns on the poster paper, and then write in the first column five situations in which they exhibit a negative attitude. In the second column, they should write the negative responses they currently have to these situations. Finally, in the third column, they should write techniques for changing these negative attitudes into positive ones.

When they have finished writing, have students decorate their posters and share them with the class.

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**Conclusion** (2 minutes)

Ask students to explain how attitude can affect a person's actions. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Attitudes are powerful; they influence outcomes by affecting our actions.
- A positive attitude motivates people and increases their ability to succeed.
- To keep a positive attitude, focus on your strengths and have confidence in your ability to succeed.

**Questions for Assessment**

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1. Describe what someone with a negative attitude looks and sounds like. Then, describe what someone with a positive attitude looks and sounds like.
2. Why is it important to have a positive attitude?
3. What can you do to keep a positive attitude?

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

**Extension:** Using Quotations

**Quote:** “Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other.”

–Abraham Lincoln

**Activity:** Discuss the quote as a class. Have students brainstorm some of their goals. Then, have them draw pictures illustrating how having a positive attitude can affect these goals.

**Extension:** Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

**Activity:** Have students listen to “When We Were Kings,” as performed by Brian McKnight and Diana King on the sound track of the 1996 Muhammad Ali documentary of the same name. Discuss the positive images the song invokes.

Have students share current music with similar themes, and/or write lyrics to their own inspiring songs.

**Extension:** Writing in Your Journal

**Activity:** Have students write about an incident that felt discouraging when it was happening. Then, have them write a second paragraph, examining the incident from a more positive perspective.

Have volunteers share their stories with the class.

**Extension:** Using Technology

**Activity:** Show *The Diary of Anne Frank*, the story of a young girl hidden from the Nazis during World War II. Despite her circumstances, Anne Frank never stopped dreaming of a better future.

The viewing of this movie should be part of a larger discussion on the history of the Holocaust, and may lead to discussions about other times in history when inner courage helped people struggling to survive.

**Extension:** Homework

**Activity:** Have students write down, for one week, comments from family and friends that reflect positive or negative attitudes.

Have students share their comments with the class. As a class, decide which comments should be banned from use in the classroom.

**Extension:** Additional Resources

**Activity:** Have students read stories about optimism and pessimism from *Speaker’s Sourcebook II* by Glenn Van Ekeren.

Have students draw cartoons showing how two characters view the same situation differently.