

MindUP Lesson 11

Choosing Optimism

Grades: 3-5

Lesson 11: Choosing Optimism is the eleventh video in a virtual series of MindUP programming for the 2020-2021 academic year. Based in neuroscience, MindUP teaches the skills and knowledge children need to manage stress, regulate emotions and face challenges with optimism, resilience and compassion.

Length of Lesson: 8 minutes including worksheet

Objectives: In this lesson, students will learn how to train their brains to see things in a more positive way when they are faced with a problem. They will explore the benefits of optimism and see how it can favorably affect their ability to think and learn, make friends and solve common problems.

Materials:

- Optimistic vs. Pessimistic Worksheet
- Pen or pencil

Preparation: Have child sitting at a desk or table before starting the lesson.

Choosing Optimism at Home:

Optimism is a way of seeing life with hopefulness and confidence. It can open us up to new ideas, experiences and possibilities. Optimistic people tend to have good health and effective coping skills. For many, optimism doesn't come naturally. However, it is a trait that can be learned if it is practiced.

Practicing optimism can increase your brain capacity. It relaxes your amygdala (the part of your brain that reacts to fear, danger, and threat) and lets the prefrontal cortex (the learning, reasoning, and thinking center of the brain) take charge. In doing so, you are helping your brain get ready to focus and make room for new information to be absorbed. For children, this can make it easier to learn. It can also strengthen their perspective-taking skills and open them to accepting varying viewpoints. Below are some ways to practice optimism at home:

- Create a "Turn Your Frown Upside Down" page in your journal. Sit with your child and write down things they can do to turn their frown moment into a smile.
- Right before your child is going to bed, help your child come up with 3 things they were grateful for that happened that day.
- Each morning, have your child practice telling themselves a positive affirmation. Try and let them come up with their own affirmations, but help them if needed. It can be simple affirmations such as "I am kind," "I am enough" or "I am loved." This can help reduce negative self-talk and increase positive thinking.

- Have your child look through magazines and cut out images or words that reflect optimistic thoughts, feelings, and actions. Have them glue these images and words down to create a collage. This activity will help create a visual representation of optimism.

REFERENCE

- The Hawn Foundation. (2011). *The MindUP Curriculum Grades 3-5: Brain-Focused Strategies for Learning and Living* (pg. 110-117). New York, NY: Scholastic.

