

Optimistic Thinking



ABOUT OPEN CIRCLE

Open Circle is an evidence-based social and emotional learning program for Kindergarten through Grade 5. Our grade-differentiated curriculum proactively develops children's social and emotional skills including recognizing and managing emotions, empathy, positive relationships and problem solving. It helps schools build a community where students feel safe, cared for and engaged in learning.

Positive Self Talk

By: Open Circle

Positive Self-Talk

OBJECTIVES

- To define “positive self-talk”
- To practice using positive self-talk

MATERIALS

- **Positive Self-Talk** mini-poster
- One copy of the Positive Self-Talk worksheet for each student.

REVIEW

Ask students to cross their arms if they have used a calming-down strategy since the last Open Circle Meeting. Take a moment and practice a calm-breathing technique together before you begin today’s Open Circle Meeting.

INTRODUCE

Ask students to give a thumbs-up if they are familiar with the term “positive self-talk.” Have a volunteer explain what positive self-talk means to him/her. Share the **Positive Self-Talk** mini-poster and read aloud the definition to introduce or review the term.

Give students an example of self-talk from your own experience. For example, “When I began taking piano lessons, my teacher gave me a new piece to learn. Even though I kept playing the wrong notes, I told myself to keep trying, and I learned how to play the piece.”

Self-talk can be positive and helpful or it can be negative, and not helpful. Ask students to think of an example of negative self-talk they might use if they got a low grade on a test or struck out in baseball. When we use negative self-talk, it can prevent us from trying. It can also make us feel worried, and upset.

Ask children to think of some positive self-talk they might use to encourage themselves when they get a disappointing grade on a test. (*I can do better next time, I’ll study hard, I know I can do it, etc.*) Positive self-talk can change your attitude and make you feel more hopeful when you are trying to do something that is difficult.

PRACTICE

Ask students to think of examples of times when they were trying to do something that was difficult for them. Have students share a few examples.

Ask them to choose one situation and imagine how they were feeling and what they were saying to themselves. Use the following questions to guide students' thinking:

How were you feeling? What thoughts were in your mind? What were you saying to yourself? Were you using negative or positive self-talk? How might you change negative self-talk to positive self-talk?

APPLY

Write the following (and other) examples of negative self-talk on strips of paper and put them in a hat or basket. Have volunteers take turns pulling a strip of paper from the hat or basket, reading it aloud, and then changing the negative self-talk to positive self-talk:

I'm no good at math. I just can't learn it. *(I am going to spend a little extra time tonight doing my math homework and reviewing the chapter.)*

I can never get a basket. *(I am going to stand five feet from the basket and use my weight to push the ball up and toward the hoop.)*

I can't write poetry. *(I am going to write a poem about something I feel strongly about.)*

I can never speak up in class. *(I am going to answer a question during class.)*

Ask children for an example of how an athlete or a performer might use positive self-talk. Tell students that they can use positive self-talk in the same way to help themselves in school. Ask students to give examples of how they could use positive self-talk to help themselves when they are doing homework, learning something new, or taking tests.

HOMEWORK/EXTEND

Distribute one copy of the Positive Self-Talk worksheet to each student. Ask them to think of one thing about which they would like to encourage themselves. Write it on the top of the grid, and place it in the corner of their desk or inside their desk. Every time that they encourage themselves today, they may make a mark on the grid. At the end of the day, ask how many marks students have made.

Before beginning a standardized test or other test in the classroom, lead students through one of the calm breathing exercises and then encourage them to use positive self-talk.

Send the *Home Link* newsletter to your students' families. To edit the *Home Link* to include more specific information about what your class is working on, or to send them electronically, you can download the text at www.open-circle.org/homelinks.

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Green, Michelle Y. *A Strong Right Arm: The Story of Mamie “Peanut” Johnson*. Puffin Books, 2004.

Mamie Johnson had to motivate herself to overcome the many obstacles to her becoming one of only three women to play baseball in the Negro Leagues.

- Why do you think Mamie Johnson was so successful as a baseball pitcher? Give an example of self-talk Mamie Johnson might have used to pitch well under pressure.

SUPPLEMENTARY LESSONS

The following supplementary lesson(s) can be used after this lesson:

- Additional Positive Self-Talk Practice

Positive Self-Talk

Saying encouraging things
to yourself



Sample Grade

Positive Self-Talk Worksheet

Choose one way in which you would like to encourage yourself, and write it in this box.

Each time you encourage yourself today, mark the grid below with an "X."

Positive Self-Talk			

Dear Family:

In a recent Open Circle Meeting, we talked about ways **to get calm when you feel upset**. We discussed what happens in our bodies and brains when we feel strong emotions. We learned how different parts of the brain, such as the frontal cortex and the amygdala, control how we feel, think and act. When we are upset, it is difficult to think clearly. We learned that calm-breathing techniques can help us calm down. Spending time with people who care about us also helps us feel calm. Calming down helps us think and make decisions.

Positive self-talk was the topic of another Open Circle lesson. Positive self-talk is saying encouraging things to yourself. Positive self-talk helps us to try harder and not give up. We can all do things that seem hard at first if we remind ourselves to keep trying and not give up. At school, we can use positive self-talk to encourage ourselves to do our best on a test or in a game, or to try something new.

At home, ask your child to explain to you what positive self-talk is and give you an example. Encourage your child to use positive self-talk when he/she seems discouraged about learning or trying something new.

Yours truly,

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Here are some books that relate to the topics we discussed in Open Circle. You might want to check out one or two at the library and read with your child:

Dakos, Kalli. *Put Your Eyes Up Here and Other School Poems*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2003.

Poems such as “Ode to My Stress Ball” and “Worried about Being Worried” describe students’ attempts to manage strong feelings they experience in school.

Green, Michelle Y. *A Strong Right Arm: The Story of Mamie “Peanut” Johnson*. Puffin Books, 2004.

Mamie Johnson had to motivate herself to overcome the many obstacles to her becoming one of only three women to play baseball in the Negro Leagues.

Estimada familia:

En una de las últimas reuniones de Open Circle, hablamos sobre cómo podemos **calmarnos cuando nos enojamos**. Conversamos sobre lo que ocurre en el cuerpo y el cerebro cuando sentimos emociones fuertes. Aprendimos que algunas partes del cerebro (como el lóbulo frontal o la amígdala cerebral) controlan cómo nos sentimos, pensamos y actuamos. Cuando estamos disgustados, nos resulta difícil pensar con claridad. Aprendimos que las técnicas de respiración nos pueden ayudar a calmarnos. Otra forma de mantenernos tranquilos es pasar tiempo con los que nos quieren. Si nos relajamos, podemos pensar y tomar decisiones.

En otra reunión hablamos sobre el **pensamiento positivo**. El pensamiento positivo consiste en decirse a uno mismo cosas alentadoras para esforzarnos y no darnos por vencidos. Aunque algunas cosas puedan parecer difíciles al principio, todos somos capaces de hacerlas si nos recordamos a nosotros mismos que debemos seguir adelante y no rendirnos. En clase podemos usar el pensamiento positivo para dar lo mejor de nosotros en un examen o en un juego, o para intentar algo nuevo.

En casa, díganles a sus hijos que les expliquen qué es el pensamiento positivo y que les den un ejemplo. Animen a sus hijos a que usen el pensamiento positivo cuando estén desanimados por los estudios o algo nuevo.

Un cordial saludo,

BIBLIOGRAFÍA

Estos son algunos de los libros relacionados con los temas que tratamos en Open Circle. Pueden consultarlos en la biblioteca o leerlos con sus hijos:

Green, Michelle Y. *A Strong Right Arm: The Story of Mamie "Peanut" Johnson*. Puffin Books, 2004.

Dakos, Kalli. *Put Your Eyes Up Here and Other School Poems*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2003.

Preparing to Facilitate Lessons

Preparing for each lesson helps you to listen and be responsive to students.

1. Read the entire lesson. Have a clear understanding of lesson objectives and key vocabulary words.
2. Review lesson “Notes.”
3. Have lesson “Materials” ready to go (skill mini-posters, chart paper, etc.).
4. Look at the suggested literature connections at the end of the lesson. If you don’t have the suggested books, choose a book that you already have that connects to the lesson content.
5. Work towards not depending on having the lesson sheet in front of you. You may want to highlight key questions on note cards or list main ideas on chart paper.
6. Consider how the objectives and concepts apply to your own life experience.
7. Think about some recent classroom examples relating to the concepts.
8. Think of ways to intentionally integrate the vocabulary and concepts into other parts of the school day.

The material on the preceding page(s) is an excerpt from the grade-differentiated *Open Circle Curriculum*. The complete curriculum contains:



- 32 core lessons across five units: Beginning Together, Managing Ourselves, Strengthening Relationships, How to Sort Problems, and Problem Solving;
- 27 supplementary lessons;
- 80 community-building and mindfulness activities and practices;
- 27 skill mini-posters;
- 18 *Home Link* family newsletters;
- Over 250 children’s literature titles that connect to specific SEL topics;
- A myriad of homework and extension activities; and
- End-of-unit student and teacher reflection activities and additional curriculum-wide reflection and assessment tools.

Open Circle is an evidence-based, universal social and emotional learning program for Kindergarten through Grade 5. The grade-differentiated *Open Circle Curriculum* proactively develops children’s social and emotional skills, including recognizing and managing emotions, empathy, positive relationships and problem solving. It also helps schools build a community where students feel safe, cared for and engaged in learning. Open Circle’s unique whole-school approach includes all adults in the school community – teachers, administrators, counselors, support staff and families – learning to model and reinforce prosocial skills throughout the school day and at home.

Teachers implement the *Open Circle Curriculum* during twice-weekly, 15-minute classroom meetings in which students form a circle of chairs, including an empty seat to symbolize that there is always room for another person or opinion. These meetings are also a familiar and safe setting for children to discuss important issues in their classroom, school, community or the broader world. Teachers and counselors also use the *Open Circle Curriculum* with students who require additional, targeted instruction.

The *Open Circle Curriculum* is designed for educators who have participated in Open Circle’s Core Program, an interactive and experiential professional development experience that combines training and coaching sessions to help educators strengthen their knowledge and skills in several areas, including: social and emotional learning (SEL) theory, research and practice; facilitation; group development and community building; problem solving; mindfulness and reflection practice; appreciation for cultural and other differences in students; integrating SEL throughout the school day; and using children’s literature to teach and reinforce SEL.

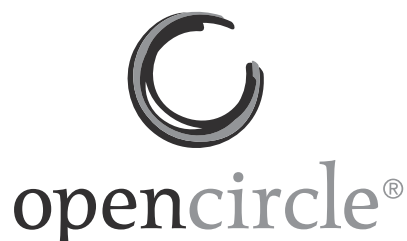
For more information, visit www.open-circle.org or call us at 781-283-3277.

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