

After the Buzz, social thinking ideas for parents and caregivers

From *What's the Buzz?* A social skills enrichment programme for primary students



Lesson 8: thinking positively

The aim of this lesson is to highlight to students the power of thinking positively, and how to do it. Here are some practical approaches parents can use at home to switch their children's emerging positive thought patterns on!

Sensitive feelings

Guide your child to see that we all have feelings, but some of us experience them more often and more deeply. Being sensitive is not a weakness. It may in actual fact become your child's greatest asset one day. However, what may be a problem is their inability to find positive ways to express disappointed or hurt feelings, and this of course is where our work lies. Make a clear distinction between the good fortune of having sensitive feelings and the inability to find constructive ways to express them.

Role model positive thinking

All children need to know that when they stay calm they give their brain the best chance to think and make the best choices. So, when something goes wrong, try to find the 'silver lining' or a lesson in it. For example, if your car runs out of petrol and you have to walk you might say, "Running out of petrol is annoying, but it gives me a chance to walk and talk with you." Similarly, show how to draw on humour when things go wrong. As Monty Python once said, "always look on the bright side of life!"

Teach positive self-talk

Most of us use positive self-talk when we find ourselves thinking through or tackling tricky situations. Let your children catch you modelling it because positive self-talk is a reliable way to stay in control, think, persist and find a solution. As mentioned earlier, studies reveal that positive self-talk training helps us find success.

Teach how to 'switch' to positive thinking

Every so often show your child how to switch their thinking. When they say, "I hate cleaning my room" you might say, "Yeah, it's not fun, but you always feel good once it's done!" Or, when you are confronted by your child complaining about a nemesis at school you might respond with, "I agree, Jarrod is tough to get along with, but remember he deals with a lot of tough stuff at home." Do what you can to guide your child to see other perspectives.

Develop a positive saying of the week

It is surprising how some children will seize on an optimistic saying and use it as an aid. The best sources for these are inexpensive, inspiring little books often found at the local news agency, or use the internet. They are both wonderful resources for these;

- Attitudes are contagious. Are yours worth catching? (Dennis and Wendy Mannering)
- Wherever you go, no matter what the weather, always bring your own sunshine. (Anthony J. D'Angelo)
- I had the blues because I had no shoes until upon the street, I met a man who had no feet. (Ancient Persian saying)
- Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference. (Winston Churchill)



- Every day may not be good, but there's something good in every day. (Author Unknown)
- Happiness is an attitude. We either make ourselves miserable, or happy and strong. The amount of work is the same. (Francesca Reigler)
- The only disability in life is a bad attitude. (Scott Hamilton)
- If you aren't fired with enthusiasm, you will be fired with enthusiasm. (Vince Lombardi)
- I don't like that man. I must get to know him better. (Abraham Lincoln)
- Make your optimism come true. (Author Unknown)
- Believe it is possible to solve your problem. Tremendous things happen to the believer. So believe the answer will come. It will. (Norman Vincent Peale)

Feel the difference!

A great way to show your child the difference between thinking positively and negatively is to help them make a set of rose coloured glasses and set of dark glasses. Use cellophane for the lenses and pipe cleaners for the frames. Next, google a few images, or find images in a magazine of people facing a challenge. Ask your child to put on the rose coloured glasses and imagine themselves as one of the people in the image thinking in the most positive way. What would they be thinking or saying to cope absolutely best with the challenge? Now take off the rose coloured glasses and put on the dark glasses. The dark glasses change the world into a more negative place where thoughts are pessimistic and gloomy. What would the people in the image be thinking or saying now about the challenge? This is an effective way for children of all ages to feel the difference. We recall doing this with a group of middle primary students. Dakota was the positive voice and another boy chose to be the negative voice in the activity. I should add that while Dakota is highly impulsive and often shows aggression, he deals with a pretty tough life at home. They both stared intently at the challenging image and offered a variety of ideas. Both generated a string of creative suggestions, but Dakota's positive self-talk was on fire! After we'd finished, he came up to me and said, "You know...I did good didn't I? I ought to listen to that stuff myself!"

Make a 'Positive Ways to Think' chart

Display it on a wall at home as a visual reminder for everyone to think, talk and act in constructive ways. Here are a few positive thought starters ...

- "I can handle this."
- "I think best when I stay calm and give my brain a chance to think."
- "Just one thing at a time"
- "This doesn't have to get me down."
- "I can talk to about it."
- "I'm smart enough to get through this."
- "It will be okay."
- "I can do this."
- "I'll have a chat to my cat about it."
- "There are a million ways to solve a problem, and I just need to choose one."



"Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo, but what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when you don't have a limo."

Oprah Winfrey

