

# High School Kit 2

## Sample Lessons



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## Join us in *Positive Action*

Welcome to *Positive Action*.

In this lesson bundle, you will discover a tool that directly addresses the most pressing issue we have in education today: responding to the mental, social and emotional demands of our students and our educators. The pandemic has magnified the issue of our wellbeing almost beyond our understanding. We need help, and *Positive Action* can provide it.

For 40 years, schools have been successfully using the *Positive Action* program. This span of experience allows us to put a high sheen on the program's materials ensuring that they are of the highest quality and user-friendly. It also provides time for robust, randomized trials that take many years but ultimately establishes the program as one of the most highly evidence-based programs, which is duly recognized by many creditable groups.

*Positive Action* is a unique program that explains how profoundly our actions, positive or negative, affect us and our lives, one of those intuitive truths we recognize when we see it. The *Positive Action* philosophy makes it all clear: *you feel good about yourself when you do positive actions, and there is a positive way to do everything*—even in this daunting and unparalleled time.

The philosophy implies that we have a desire to feel good about ourselves, which we all do. To feel good about ourselves is a very powerful motivator. It is called intrinsic motivation, which is in all of us and one of the most influential forces to motivate us to do right.

*Positive Action* graphically represents the philosophy with the Thoughts-Actions-Feelings about Self Circle (TAF). It makes applying the philosophy easy to understand and, therefore, use. The TAF Circle demonstrates how thoughts lead to actions, actions lead to feelings about self (as in self-worth and *not* emotions, i.e., anger, fear, worry, etc.), and feelings about self lead back to thoughts. Whether the TAF Circle is positive or negative, it is always self-reinforcing.

The program aims to teach the philosophy, TAF Circle, and key positive actions for our whole self: physical, intellectual, social, and emotional areas.

All the components of the *Positive Action* program are organized into six units:

- Unit 1—The program foundation: Philosophy and TAF Circle
- Unit 2—Positive Actions for the physical and intellectual areas

(Units Three through Six are positive actions for the social and emotional areas)

- Unit 3—Positive Actions for Self-Management (thoughts, actions, feelings, time, energy, money, possessions, and talents)
- Unit 4—Positive Actions for Getting Along with Others
- Unit 5—Positive Actions for Honesty with Self and Others
- Unit 6—Positive Actions for Continual Self-Improvement

The program components are:

- Pre-K–12 curricula
- Supplemental curricula: Drug Education, Bullying Prevention, and Conflict Resolution

- School Climate Development
- Counselor's Kit
- Family Kit
- Family/Parenting Classes

Together, *Positive Action* is a unified but flexible system for the whole school community that provides a common language and shared goals. It is a powerful approach that generates innovative thinking that is needed, especially in overwhelmingly challenging times, as they are today.

The program has all the materials prepared for ease of use. The lessons/activities are planned and scripted, with all supporting materials assembled into a kit. You have the advantage of having an extensive amount of work done for you to assure that what you do is coherent, complete, and effective. You can quickly and easily get to the heart of the matter in just the right way with these well-developed materials.

For implementation, we suggest that you adapt the materials within the guidelines of honoring the concepts and strategies, while at the same time, considering your students—their needs, challenges, and cultures. With *Positive Action*, you are giving your students a wonderful gift: a way to view and achieve in life—by using positive actions—no matter the barriers.

The universality of the program's philosophy also works for you as a professional and personally. Your life experiences provide you with evidence of the validity of the concepts. Sharing your experiences with your students as you teach the lessons enhances their understanding of the value of positive actions even more deeply.

The end goal of *Positive Action* is to realize that when you feel good about yourself by doing positive actions, you are happy and successful. Success and happiness, as defined by *Positive Action*, is feeling good about who you are and what you are doing—this is the *Positive Action* way. It works for everyone, and it will work for you and your students too. This approach is needed now more than ever as we face these unprecedented challenges to how we think about happiness and success. There is a positive path through these dark days, and *Positive Action* is poised to help us discover it.

We warmly invite you to join us in creating a learning environment where potentials are reached and dreams achieved even in the challenging times of Covid-19 and other critical obstacles. By acting positively and working together, we, individually and collectively, can become even stronger and our wellbeing more improved than ever before.

Enclosed are sample lessons to provide you with a glimpse at what *Positive Action* has to offer. There are lessons for each of the six units. Some lessons are more appropriate for in-class use and others for hybrid/distance learning use. These lessons have been extracted from the complete instructor's manual. They have been edited to better stand alone; some have been modified omitting a few of the traditionally used materials that are provided in the complete kit. Images of posters, visual aids, activity sheets, and manipulatives can be requested through our support portal, allowing you to preview what you would receive in a complete kit.

# Lesson 1

## Who Am I?

Positive Thoughts

- Goals:** ♦ To learn the *Positive Action* philosophy and define self-concept.
- ♦ To learn that how we think and feel about ourselves is our self-concept.
- Objective:** ♦ To introduce the *Positive Action* philosophy: “You feel good about yourself when you do positive actions, and there is a positive way to do everything.”

MATERIALS	
✓	<b>Needed</b>
✓	Pens
✓	Paper
	<b>Provided</b>
✓	None

### Procedure

**Teacher:** Write the name “e.e. cummings” and his quotation, “who are you little i?” on the board in lowercase letters as you say the following.

**Say:** There’s a poem by E.E. Cummings that starts: “who are you little i?” Notice I’m writing his name on the board entirely in lowercase letters; also note how he writes the pronoun “I” in lowercase. What do you think he meant by that?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** You could say cummings was asking life’s big question, “Who am I?” In this poem, he uses the lower case “i” to refer to himself as a young boy, the way a child might feel small. What can help a person evolve from a lower case “i” of a child to an upper case “I” of becoming an adult?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: Growing and learning as you move from being a child into your teen years. Becoming more aware of who you are as a person. Being aware of your thoughts and actions.

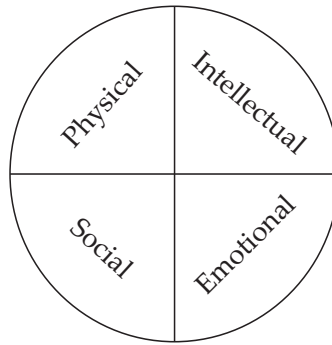
**Say:** People want and need to feel good about themselves; it’s a deep emotional and social need. A lot of what we think, do, and feel is aimed at meeting that need — whether we are aware of it or not. How many of you are aware of your feelings about yourself? Raise your hands.

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** Everything we think and do creates our feeling about ourselves—this is called our self-concept. Our self-concept impacts our goals, attitudes, and decisions—and how our lives turn out. To better understand and strengthen our self-concept, it’s helpful to focus on the four major areas of our lives: physical, intellectual, social, and emotional.

**Teacher:** Draw the diagram below and show it to students. Have them draw it on a sheet of paper, including the words in each quarter: Physical, Intellectual, Social, and Emotional.





**Say:** Now, let's take a moment to rate how we feel about ourselves in each of these areas. Perhaps you are an athlete and you feel competent and confident in the physical area of your life most of the time. Under Physical, you'd write 95% and a plus sign to indicate positive feelings. But perhaps you are shy and sometimes have a hard time talking to people, so in the Social area, maybe you'd write 40% and a plus sign to indicate you feel positive about 40% of the time, and 60% and a negative sign to indicate you feel negative about 60% of the time. Don't worry; we won't be sharing this information. This is just to help you get a picture of your feelings about yourself.

**Teacher:** Do the activity. Reassure the students that if their responses seem to be all over the map, it's okay; it's normal for teens. They are in a growth phase and things are in flux.

**Say:** Our self-concept is the result of our thoughts and actions in these four areas of our lives. *Positive Action's PHILOSOPHY* is that *we feel good about ourselves when we do positive actions, and there is a positive way to do everything.*

**Teacher:** Ask students to repeat it with you.

**Say:** Having a positive self-concept is a consequence of thinking positive thoughts and doing positive actions. Feeling good about ourselves means that we feel competent and confident in the physical, intellectual, social, and emotional areas of our lives. It means we can trust ourselves to make good decisions and do the best we can. It means that we feel good about ourselves most of the time, and that we care about what happens to other people. Does this sound simple to achieve, or complex to achieve? Why?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** There are additional factors that can influence our self-concepts.

**First**, we don't always know what thoughts and actions are positive. If we grew up in an unhappy home or in a violent neighborhood, we might have received confusing messages about how to act in a positive way. Therefore, our sense of ourselves is skewed, too.

There's also the impact of popular culture: movies, TV, Internet, and computer games that often depict disrespectful, obscene, and physically destructive behavior. We get mixed messages all the time. Some teens think you have to choose between being "cool" or "good." We think you can be both.

**Second**, if we haven't been taught about positive actions in a clear and practical way, we might not understand how positive actions form a solid positive self-concept. Nor do we understand how positive thoughts and actions can help create a great life, one that we really want.

**Third**, positive actions require more conscious attention than negative actions. Even so, positive actions have bigger payoffs overall in terms of happiness and success.

Why do you think building a positive self-concept demands more from us than a negative self-concept?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: Because building a positive self-concept requires we take responsibility for our thoughts and actions, and our lives. We may need to change old habits.

**Say:** When it comes to our self-concept, we can choose to either build a positive self-concept or let a negative self-concept take over our minds and hearts.

Think about your life: All of the surprising, difficult, puzzling things that are part of everyday life for teens. Think of one positive thought that could make a difference in your life and write that down on your paper.

**Teacher:** Do the activity.

**Say:** Our old buddy, Dr. Seuss, has a great little poem:

*"You have brains in your head.*

*You have feet in your shoes.*

*You can steer yourself any direction you choose.*

*You're on your own.*

*And you know what you know.*

*And YOU are the one who'll decide where to go!"*

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## Teacher's Toolbox

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### Vocabulary

**Teacher:** These words are used in the curriculum and may be new to your students. Please use them however you wish: as an exercise to expand vocabulary or improve spelling.

### Philosophy

A system of thoughts or beliefs.

### Teacher's Inspiration

*When I do good, I feel good. —Abraham Lincoln*

There is a direct link between positive behaviors and positive feelings that has been documented and recognized throughout time.

# Lesson 4

## How Do Our Thoughts, Actions, and Feelings Work?

Positive Thoughts

**Goal:** ♦ To learn that our thoughts, actions, and feelings work in a self-reinforcing circle that can be either positive or negative.

**Objectives:** ♦ To demonstrate a working knowledge of the *Positive Action* model.  
♦ To demonstrate that a negative circle can be interrupted by thinking positive thoughts, and that a positive circle can be re-established by taking positive action.

MATERIALS

### Needed

- ✓ Pens
- ✓ Paper

### Provided

- ✓ Image of "Thoughts-Actions-Feelings Circle" Poster

## Procedure

**Say:** We have thousands of thoughts that go through our minds each day. Do you think these thoughts affect us? How?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: Our thoughts affect our moods, our self-concept. Our thoughts also affect what actions we take; what we choose to do—and not do.

**Say:** How much influence do our thoughts have over our actions?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: All of our thoughts—both conscious thoughts and unconscious perceptions—influence all of our actions.

**Say:** We also have feelings about the actions we do each day; feelings about our lives, our capability, our character, and our core selves. Those feelings are influenced by whether what we did was positive or negative, and whether the consequences of our actions were good or bad. If what we did was negative and the consequences were disastrous, we might beat up on ourselves for a long time. Has that ever happened to anyone you know?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: Of course, it happens all the time.

**Say:** By becoming aware of what we're thinking and what actions we choose to do, we can learn how to navigate our lives in better ways, and this affects how we feel about ourselves.

We call this process the Thoughts-Actions-Feelings about Self Circle, a *MODEL* that illustrates the philosophy of the *Positive Action* program: *You feel good about yourself when you do positive actions, and there is a positive way to do everything.* Let's take a look at the poster to see how it works.

**Teacher:** Display the "Thoughts-Actions-Feelings Circle" Poster and point out the positive side.

**Say:** We have a positive thought that leads to a positive action. That positive action leads to a positive feeling about ourselves. That good feeling helps us to choose another positive thought and put it into action. How do you think doing this circle would affect our self-concept?



**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** Each time we choose a positive thought that leads to a positive action, our self-concept grows even more positive. This positive circle of thoughts, actions, and feelings repeats itself as long as we choose to put positive thoughts into action.

**Teacher:** Now point out the negative side of the “Thoughts-Actions-Feelings Circle” Poster.

**Say:** We’ve just seen how the Positive Circle works. Unfortunately, there is also a Negative Circle.

When we choose to act on negative thoughts, then we do negative actions that make us feel bad about ourselves. That can create a dismal day, and maybe even a dismal life. Have you had experiences with “miserable, horrible, really bad days”?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** The thing about Negative Circles is that if they are allowed to exist too long, they become a powerful, downward spiral that’s really tough to turn around. Those circles can lead to problems at school, trouble with the law, addiction to drugs or alcohol, problems with parents and family, inappropriate sexual activity, violence and even death. We’re very serious about this. Has this happened to anyone you know?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** You have the power to make choices about your life—whether to focus on positive thoughts, actions, and feelings. Or to allow negative thoughts to control your actions and your life.

Our thoughts and actions can build a positive self-concept or a negative self-concept—and profoundly affect what kind of life we will have.

**Teacher:** Point out the positive side of the “Thoughts-Actions-Feelings Circle” Poster again.

**Say:** So, the question is this: What circles are at work in your life? Take out a piece of paper and write a couple of paragraphs about this.

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## Teacher’s Toolbox

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### Vocabulary

#### Model

An illustration or graphic that demonstrates an idea, a philosophy, a visual structure representing the truth.

### Teacher’s Inspiration

*“You are today where your thoughts have brought you; you will be tomorrow where your thoughts take you.”  
—James Allen*

The Thoughts-Actions-Feelings Circle is a modern representation of universal, timeless life experience. You are what you think.

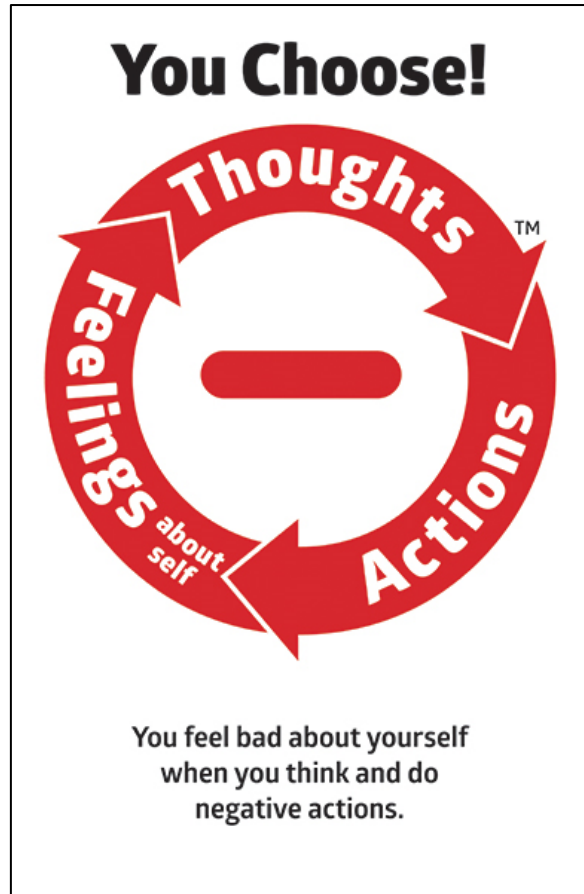
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## Lesson 4



**Front**



**Back**

# Lesson 30

## Does How You Look Reflect Who You Are?

**Goal:** ♦ To reflect on the physical positive actions of personal cleanliness.

- Objectives:** ♦ To help students identify their physical attractiveness by a variety of facets.
- ♦ To help students understand that the best pathway is to present an honest self-image, reflected through cleanliness, clothes, and abilities.

MATERIALS

### Needed

- ✓ Pens
- ✓ Paper

### Provided

- ✓ *Guide to a Positive Life*  
Student Texts, Chapter 10

## Procedure

**Say:** Social and cultural pressures to look like a celebrity and be a millionaire can push people into troubling situations that are tricky, especially if you look ordinary and don't have a lot of money. Very few people can navigate that with any sense of ease or comfort. It's much easier to look like who you really are. Do you think people in our school are more interested in how people look? Or who people are?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** Most teen social systems are in flux. One of the reasons a person can be part of a group one minute, and out of it the next, is based on looks. Has that happened to someone you know?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** It's complicated though, because how we look is tied to our identity. We need to be faithful to who we are as a person, and to create our own self-image—it's one of the major ways we communicate who we are to the world. If a techie starts to wear clothes that athletes wear, he or she will be distrusted until a new stronger, healthier body is also included in the mix. Have you ever noticed anybody who didn't dress in a way that was consistent with their personality, ambition, and ability?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** That's why positive thoughts and actions are so important as creators of self-concept and self-image, because they allow teens without a lot of money, or who were born less than perfect physically to become achievers, learners, competitors who are pleased with who they are.

An authentic self-image is also an entrance into sports, business, the arts, technology, and academics. It's impossible for everybody to look beautiful or handsome, but it is entirely possible to look like your best self. How do you do that?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: By having a sensibility of who you are and what you want to do with your life, then supporting that with cleanliness, appropriate clothing and hair styles, and being on track and on time with your own life.

Positive Feelings



**Say:** Get a sheet of paper and let's write for a few minutes. You have three questions to answer.

Who are you? Write one paragraph about your personality, your ideals, your dreams, your talents, your body, your character, the things that you like.

Does the image you present to the world, through your clothes, your hair style, your state of cleanliness reflect who you are?

What could you do to make your image and your self-concept *COHERENT*? What positive thoughts, actions, and feelings would get you pointed in a great direction?

**Teacher:** Do the activity. Ask if some would be willing to share their responses or perceptions. Allow time to read *Guide to a Positive Life* Student Text, Chapter 10, "Is there A Safe and Sane Way for Me?"

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## Teacher's-Toolbox

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### Vocabulary

#### Coherent

Diverse elements that work together or mesh in a good way.

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# Chapter 10

## Is There a Safe and Sane Way for Me?

**Goals:** To learn that the physical positive actions of cleanliness, safety, and disease prevention help you stay healthy and feel good about yourself.

Even if you use all the physical positive actions you've learned so far, you'll be in a world of hurt if you don't stay clean, safe, and healthy. You'll know about a lot of these positive actions, but a little refresher course never hurt anyone.

Obviously, washing your hands is the most important positive action for keeping clean. You know that one; you've been told over and over since your little hands could reach the sink...even before that. But how well do you do? Remember, it's an all the time thing: after you go to the bathroom, before you eat, periodically throughout the day, and of course after you know you've been exposed to an infectious disease. The thing is, most of the time you don't even know it. Germs settle on your hands, and then if you rub your eyes or nose, you invite those infectious agents into your body—not something you want to do. It's amazing what a little hot water and soap can do to keep you healthy. Of course, that also includes a bath or a shower every day.

Another area of cleanliness (or uncleanness) in your life is your personal space: your room, your locker, your car. They don't tidy themselves. You have to deal with the dust, dirt, mold, and mildew that continually invade your space. Otherwise, it accumulates and attracts bacteria and viruses. Pretty soon you're living in filth. And nobody wants that.



*Do I live in a clean world or a filthy world? What's keeping me from being clean? What is one thing I can do to be more clean?*

As for safety, you'll probably recognize the most basic positive actions. They include wearing a helmet when you bike, skate, or ski; wearing sun screen when you go outside; and buckling up when you get in a car. Physicians and paramedics refer to teens that don't wear helmets as “flat-liners”—a reference to a brain scan that indicates no energy impulses in the brain. Brain death. And the quick and easy decision to not wear sun screen could result in skin cancer on your nose in 20 years. Is it really worth it?



*Am I smart enough and safe enough to take these precautions? If not, how can I remember to start?*

A bigger and more complex issue of cleanliness and safety is sexual activity, which can pose significant disease risks for you. Herpes, chlamydia, and genital warts are all epidemic among teens. Sex isn't the only thing that spreads these nasty diseases; any kind of sexual activity can pass them between partners. AIDS is also a significant hazard, particularly for teens that have multiple partners. Medical costs to treat it are high and most insurance plans don't cover those costs. You could throw your life away before you even get a good start.

And then there's unplanned pregnancy, an abrupt reality that makes life tougher for teenagers in multiple ways.

As if all that's not enough, there are also significant social and emotional hazards for sexually active teenagers. Because their hormones are still fluctuating, sexual relationships are a breeding ground for toxic emotional distress for both sexes.



*Is my self-concept so poor that I use sexuality to attract attention? Do I need to find help to change sexual behaviors that are trouble for me and the people around me?*

There are positive behaviors that can help you escape the dangerous cycle of early sexual activity. Respect for other people, consideration for their privacy and their feelings, setting your own boundaries, and becoming aware of your needs for positive connections to your family and community will all help you find more positive outlets for your emotions.

Another dangerous health and safety hazard for teenagers is using tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. Teenage brain cells are still growing and making connections in the prefrontal cortex, which makes them more vulnerable to addiction and to poor judgment than they will be at any other time in their lives. If you can avoid alcohol, drugs, and tobacco until you are 21 years old, then your chances of using these substances and becoming addicted decrease in a big way. If not, the physical, financial, legal, and social outcomes can be a disaster. Few things will cause a human being more grief than an addiction. Drugs, alcohol, and tobacco can damage or destroy a life before it's even begun. You don't want that life to be yours.



*Am I at risk for an addiction? Do I participate in using alcohol, drugs, or tobacco? What positive behaviors or situations would help put me in a better place? Do I need help to do that?*

Even if you do all this to stay safe, sometimes your environment at home or school makes your life difficult. You can't thrive in a chaotic, violent environment, so if physical or verbal fights are in your home, tell somebody and get help fast. Violence, whether it comes to you or from you, destroys your image of yourself and creates the possibility of serious mental and emotional illness. You become a candidate for depression, distraction, anger, and anxiety, which may then lead to self-medicating with alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs. If this is the case, get help, you don't have to deal with this on your own.

That's a lot to remember, but the basic concept is that you need to take the positive actions to be safe and clean, and to make your environment safe and clean. You'll have the best chance at a successful and happy life if you take these basic precautions.

# Lesson 34

## Are You Unleashing Your Learning Potential?

Positive Thoughts

**Goal:** ♦ To learn the intellectual positive action of learning new things.

- Objectives:** ♦ To discuss the rate of change in our culture and connect that with the need to learn new things to be competitive.
- ♦ To discuss the necessity of becoming lifelong learners.
  - ♦ To explore how educational disciplines overlap and create opportunities for improved performance.

MATERIALS	<b>Needed</b>
	✓ None
	<b>Provided</b>
	✓ None

### Procedure

**Say:** How many of you think what you're learning in school now is up-to-date?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** Why is it hard to make sure your knowledge is "up to the minute"?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** The rate of change in the world and in our society makes it challenging. For example, the maps of the world have changed drastically within the past few years. Mathematicians now originate calculations that take them into higher orders of thinking. There are no words that describe the fourth or tenth dimensions, yet our mathematics suggest they exist. Tech products you take for granted now weren't around five years ago. In order to keep pace with the changing world, you need to reach for new knowledge as best you can. If it is such a good idea to learn new things, why does learning sometimes make people feel tired or bored?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** Your job as a student is learning, and some of that is repetitive. The subjects you study in school—science, social science, math, language, literature, and humanities—are a good starting point for developing a healthy foundation of life-enhancing knowledge. But they are only a starting point. There isn't enough time or money to present all that's happening in the world.

In order to thrive in our culture, you need to become your own teacher, a lifelong learner, and to look actively for knowledge that expands your thinking. As the philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson remarked, "The horizon is the health of the eye."

What positive thoughts about learning can help you become a self-directed learner?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Write them on the board.



**Say:** Here are other positive thoughts: Knowledge is power in our culture, and power translates into money and a better life. All of the educational disciplines overlap. What you learn in physics can help you understand history, what you understand in business helps you understand politics, what you learn in art history helps you understand the science and philosophy of that time.

For example, an art student might think that physics is a waste of time, until the student realizes that the science of light has a dramatic and immediate impact on how a piece of art develops and is seen by others. Can you think of other examples?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** Knowledge gives us the power and insight to make wise choices in our lives. You may have heard the phrase *INFORMED DECISION*. An informed decision is a decision made with as much relevant knowledge as possible. How can we learn to be our own best teacher?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** Letting our healthy curiosity roam is a first step. It is also helpful to slow down and not form an immediate opinion about something until we have exercised a little curiosity by doing some research.

Mass media often confuses the difference between fact and opinion. The nature of a “sound-bite”, whether on the news or in advertisements, may give little in the way of facts and a lot of opinion because opinion can be said in a second. When you reduce a complex story to a sound-bite, what gets lost in the reduction?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: Facts, evidence, history, impacts, and solutions.

**Say:** What positive thoughts can propel your own learning?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: Your own interests, mysteries, curiosities and connections can propel your learning.

**Say:** When did you last learn something completely new and unpredictable? Perhaps from a TV show, or book, or scientific theory you saw online. Or maybe a friend, a parent, or a teacher said something that helped solve a big problem.

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Ask the students what kind of energy those kinds of learning experiences generate. Ask them how to reproduce that energy.

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## Teacher's Toolbox

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### Vocabulary

#### Informed Decision

Bringing the greatest possible amount of information to the decision-making process in order to include as many perspectives as possible.

### Teacher's Inspiration

Emerson's remark about “the horizon is the health of the eye” applies to teachers who might sometimes think that their professional horizon consists just of additional course credits that translate into pay increments. Teachers can set goals for themselves for their psychological and spiritual growth, and while these also translate into pay raises, they deeply enhance job and life satisfaction. We recommend articles and books by the educator Parker Palmer who writes thoughtfully about these “horizons” teachers can discover.

Other quotes about learning:

*“Man’s mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions.”*

–Oliver Wendell Holmes

*“It is a very sad fact nowadays that there is so little useless information anymore.”* –Oscar Wilde

*“One important key to success is self-confidence. An important key to self-confidence is preparation.”*

–Arthur Ashe



# Lesson 60

## What's Going on in My Head?

**Goal:** ♦ To reflect on the social and emotional positive actions for the personal resource of managing thoughts.

**Objectives:** ♦ To practice reframing.  
♦ To discuss adolescent brain development.  
♦ To talk about impulse control.

MATERIALS

### Needed

- ✓ Pens
- ✓ Paper

### Provided

- ✓ Image of "Think" Poster 16-3-HSK2
- ✓ *Guide to a Positive Life* Student Texts, Chapter 20

## Procedure

**Say:** Changing your thoughts from negative to positive is called reframing. With elementary school students, we call this "flipping" a thought. Reframing is a psychological term, which means changing a negative thought for a better thought.

The trick is this: the new thought has to be absolutely honest for this to work. For example, "my parents don't understand me" is a repetitive thought a lot of teens have. Your parents might not understand; that's true. So a better, yet realistic thought is, "My parents might understand me a little better if I actually told them what is going on in my life."

Let's reframe three thoughts.

- ♦ School is boring and I'll never learn this stuff.
- ♦ Everybody hates me.
- ♦ I'll never have enough money to get the things I want.

**Teacher:** Allow time for the activity. Ask the students to write two or three thoughts that are more positive to reframe each negative thought. Have them share some of their responses.

**Say:** Do you think teens always, consciously, know why they do the things they do?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: There's always an impetus for every action. It might be an unrealized or unacknowledged thought, but it's always there.

**Say:** When you were in elementary school and you did something wrong, and somebody asked you, "Why? What were you thinking?" most likely you said, "I dunno." That's because children frequently act out of impulse; they aren't able to link their thoughts with their actions very well. We don't expect them to—that's why they are rarely without adult supervision.

When you become a teen, that immature level of thinking no longer works, and the consequences from impulsive actions can get serious. That's why slowing down, thinking things through can be profoundly beneficial for teens. Why might that be true?

Positive Feelings



**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: Slowing down gives you a little more time to process. The frontal cortex, which is used for judgment and analysis, is slower to develop than other parts of the brain. It usually isn't fully developed until your early twenties.

**Say:** You give yourself a big “heads-up” when you slow down your thinking. Even asking yourself a simple question, like, “Is this a good idea?” can help you slow down, refocus, and reorient your actions. It's an incredibly important maturational step.

This is called *IMPULSE CONTROL*, which means you think first before you act— even if only for a moment. Having impulse control can save you from making serious mistakes.

**Teacher:** Display “Think” Poster 16-3-HSK2. Ask for a volunteer to read the poster aloud: “This is your life. This is not a rehearsal. Think before you act.”

**Say:** One of our challenges as we move into adulthood is digging out unacknowledged thoughts, particularly if they are causing trouble. For example, unconscious thoughts that create a barrier to learning, making friends, or being unable to articulate your dreams.

Do an inner search for a minute. See if there is a thought that's getting in your way, and write it down. Then, see if you can find a way to reframe that negative thought into a more positive thought.

**Teacher:** Allow a few minutes for the activity. Ask if they would share some of the positive thoughts they created. What new thoughts might be helpful to everybody in the room?

Have the students read *Guide to a Positive Life* Student Text, Unit 3, Chapter 20, “How Do I Manage What I Think?”

## Teacher's Toolbox

### Vocabulary

#### Impulse Control

The ability to consciously control thoughts and actions. A psychological term.

### Word of the Week

#### Thoughts

Ideas that result from thinking.

## Lesson 60



# Chapter 20

## How Do I Manage What I Think?

**Goals:** To learn that the social and emotional positive action of managing your thoughts gives you the power to develop a self and a life worth having, keeps you on track and on time, and helps you feel good about yourself.

What goes on in the space between your ears has a lot to do with how you feel about yourself and how your life turns out. In fact, there's a lot going on in your head when you are an adolescent.

You've learned in the lessons that your brain is changing and developing, particularly in your frontal cortex, the place where your judgment, goal-setting, and decision-making tasks take place. These changes can create havoc in your life. You may have verbal outbursts or actions that perplex you, have performance anxiety that blocks access to the right answers, or have a tough time with decision-making tasks.

The good news is that while your body and brain make these adjustments, you can take some positive actions to manage your thoughts in a way that gets you through adolescence to adulthood in one happy, healthy piece.

The first strategy for managing your thoughts is giving yourself time to think through things. Your brain may send you impetuous thoughts and actions that aren't in your best interest. This is when you can take a few minutes to find better pathways for yourself: reasonable decisions, emotions that are better controlled, a return to sanity and safety.



*What recent situation that turned out negatively could have been avoided if I would have paused to think about it?*

The second strategy is giving yourself more choices. Your developing brain can get stuck in certain neural pathways. Sometimes it may feel like you can never make a decision, that things will never work out, that you have no choice or no way through. This is when it is vital that you give yourself more choices. Sit down and make a list of options for dealing with situations. Then consider the pros and cons of each choice to find the best one.



*Where am I stuck now? What options can I give myself? What positive thoughts would help?*

The third strategy is re-framing your thinking by looking at a bad situation in a new way. It's the same process you use to flip from a Failure Circle to a Success Circle, and it starts with the same thing: the thought. You've got to start by examining the thoughts that are running through your head. For example, "I'm so dumb," runs through your mind over and over again. This is an extremely negative and harmful thought. A better, more positive thought is this, "I'm learning in my own way and my own time." It's truthful and it gives you options and possibilities that the negative, old, worn-out, useless thought does not. Of course, now that you have a positive thought, positive actions and feelings will follow.

You'll find yourself in a Success Circle rather than a Failure Circle. Your thoughts are that important.

In fact, learning how to manage them is your most complex developmental task. It goes back to training your brain to be positive, which takes practice, intention, and consciousness.

So, give yourself some time, some choices, and the chance to re-frame from the negative to the positive, and let your thoughts propel you to a brighter future of achievement, success, and happiness.

# Lesson 64

## What Are You Feeling?

Positive Thoughts

**Goal:** ♦ To learn the social and emotional positive actions for managing the personal resource of feelings.

**Objectives:** ♦ To discuss neurological implications for intense adolescent emotional states.  
♦ To discuss the outcomes of managed and unmanaged emotional responses.

MATERIALS	
Needed	✓ None
Provided	✓ "Frontal Lobe" Visual Aid 64-3-HSK2

### Procedure

**Say:** One thing that seems to be true at this time of your life is that teens have intense feelings. A momentary embarrassment can cause the most strident self-blame. Unfairness is cause for revolt. A loss of a love can be the cause of loss of life or a scary stalking incident. That's the downside.

On the upside, you might feel the most intense romantic love you will ever feel. Things will be funnier or more fun than at any other time of your life. Your spirit soars because of some great thing that you accomplished. Does that seem true in your experience? What are some of your stories?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Display "Frontal Lobe" Visual Aid 64-3-HSK2. Point out the frontal lobe and the *AMYGDALA* as you go through the next text.

**Say:** This is all your brain's fault. The part of your brain that filters those intense emotions, called the frontal lobe, is still in the development stage. The part of your brain that creates the hormones of emotions, the amygdala, is less controlled than at any other time in your life, because of the slower rate of development.

That's why you can tip over into rage over something that would merely irritate you in another time of your life. It's why sexual feelings can overwhelm your own good sense or your ethics. It's why you can get intensely jealous over somebody's new car or new boyfriend. And why stress can get to you in a big way.

It's also why taking risks can feel so good. The adrenaline from those activities feels really good, and you feel it full force. Why is it important for teens to learn how to manage their emotions?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Write responses on the board. Guide toward:

- ♦ Unmanaged emotions, like fear, anger, or jealousy can lead to dangerous actions.
- ♦ Unmanaged emotions can result in rash decisions that can derail you from your dreams and ideals for a long time.



- ◆ Some teens use drugs, tobacco, or alcohol to self-medicate unmanageable emotions, which causes additional problems.
- ◆ Self-hatred (and maybe jail time) can result from unmanageable emotions and the consequences of rash negative actions.
- ◆ Unmanaged emotions limit your ability to solve problems.
- ◆ Teens can get stuck in negative, unmanaged emotional cycles, such as depression, anxiety, stress, anger, or distraction

**Say:** What does managing your emotions do for you?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Write them on the board. Guide toward:

- ◆ Keeps you headed toward your own dreams and ideals.
- ◆ Helps you get a handle on success and happiness.
- ◆ Keeps you out of serious trouble.
- ◆ Keeps you and other people around you safe.
- ◆ Helps reduce the desire to use drugs, alcohol, or tobacco.
- ◆ Refocuses intense emotions into a positive experience by changing your behaviors. (An example: a bad grade doesn't mean you are dumb—that's an intense emotional response; a bad grade means that you need to study better—something you can do.)
- ◆ Helps you maintain ethical standards.
- ◆ Helps manage your stress levels.

**Say:** Managing emotions is tricky. A lot of teens feel like they might be crazy when they have these intense emotional experiences. Just knowing what is happening to you really helps you maintain some emotional balance. You are more likely to wait out the emotion until you can calm down a bit and can refocus your thoughts and actions.

## Teacher's Toolbox

### Vocabulary

#### Amygdala

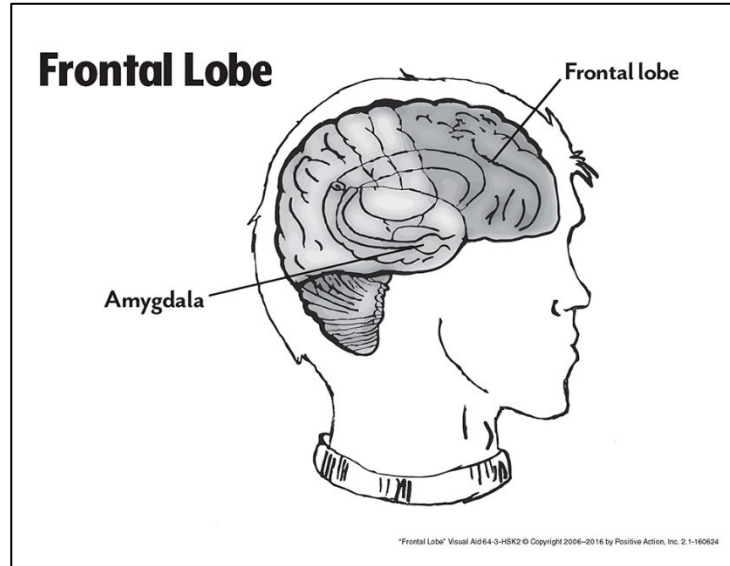
A bean-shaped organ at the center of the brain that regulates the hormones of emotion.

### Teacher's Inspiration

*"A people sometimes will step back from war,  
elect an honest man, decide they care  
enough, that they can't leave some stranger poor.  
Some men become what they were born for.*

*Sometimes our best efforts do not go  
amiss, sometimes we do as we meant to.  
The sun will sometimes melt a field of sorrow  
that seemed hard frozen, may it happen for you." —Sheenagh Pugh*

## Lesson 64





# Lesson 79

## What Is Fair?

Positive Thoughts

**Goal:** ♦ To learn the social and emotional positive action of fairness.

**Objectives:** ♦ To discuss teen sensitivity to the issue of fairness.  
♦ To explore positive actions that can resolve fairness issues.

MATERIALS	Needed
	✓ None
	Provided
	✓ None

### Procedure

**Say:** Has life been fair to you today? Or has it been unfair?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: Most people have issues about fairness every day: It's not fair that some students are liked more than others. It's not fair that some teens are more adept athletically, or artistically, than others.

**Say:** Life isn't fair. Some people get terrible diseases that can derail their lives. Some people get behind in their learning skills, and that affects them for years. Maybe a terrible storm takes away everything they have. What other things do you see as unfair in our culture or our community?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** Teens seem compelled by issues of unfairness. It really irritates them, sometimes to the point of anger. Why is that?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: Life is so competitive when you are an adolescent that any sense of unfairness may cause teens to think that they are at a disadvantage, or are being rejected by others.

**Say:** We primarily have two kinds of responses to unfairness. The first includes whining, complaining, backbiting, gossiping—none of which are very positive. While that can be entertaining, there are some big problems with those responses. Why?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: Reacting in those ways brings about loss of personal power and self-respect.

**Say:** When you engage in those negative responses, you feel like a victim. If that happens often enough, you might be learning to be helpless and hopeless, which can lead to problems with depression and anxiety. That's called "learned helplessness" in psychology. Whining and complaining, particularly, increase your feelings of not being able to cope, which *IMPLODES* your sense of personal power or action. Has that ever happened to someone you know?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** The other response is to be fair to yourself, to map out a course of thoughtful, logical, respectful positive actions that can address the problem and can create an environment of fairness where everyone can thrive. What are the benefits of that response?



**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward:

- ◆ You create enough confidence and competence to be able to make great choices
- ◆ You create character traits that are fairer to you and to others (example: Studying hard enough to do well on a test is being fair to yourself; studying with other classmates so that everybody can do better is even fairer.)
- ◆ By choosing to act fairly to yourself and others, you help create a world that is fairer.

**Say:** What are some things you think are unfair at our school?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses and write them on the board.

**Say:** What are some things you think are fair?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses and write them on the board. Then compare the lists. Ask for suggestions that would help the unfair items become fairer. Write them on the board.

## Teacher's Toolbox

### Vocabulary

#### Implodes

Destroys something from the inside out; to explode or burst so that outer structures fall inward.

### Teacher's Inspiration

*"For it is important that awake people be awake,  
or a breaking line may discourage them back to sleep,  
the signals we give—yes, no, or maybe—  
should be clear: the darkness around us deep."*

*—William Stafford, from A Ritual to Read to Each Other*

Modeling fairness is the ultimate in being "awake." Your demonstrations of how to approach unfair situations will help your students make decisions and choose actions that will create an atmosphere of fairness and improve the environment in your school and community.

# Lesson 84

## How Does Respect Feel?

**Goal:** ♦ To reflect on the social and emotional positive action of respect.

**Objectives:** ♦ To discuss the power of respect in a community.  
♦ To explore how creative and thoughtful respect can be.

MATERIALS	
<b>Needed</b>	
✓	Pens
✓	Paper
<b>Provided</b>	
✓	<i>Guide to a Positive Life</i> Student Texts, Chapter 28

### Procedure

**Say:** A Jewish family, a husband and wife with a young son and daughter, moved to a small Montana city where no one who was Jewish had lived before. During their first week in their new home, someone threw a rock through their bedroom window with a note attached that read: "Dirty Jews, go back where you came from." This is called a *HATE CRIME*. How would you feel if that happened to your family?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** When word of this cowardly and hateful act spread throughout the city, people began to put a sign up in each of their bedroom windows—a Star of David, the symbol of Judaism. This act of respect and solidarity, which involved thousands of those who weren't Jewish, made the new family feel respected in their new home. How would you feel if that happened to your family?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** The writer George Eliot wrote something that sums up the positive action of these people: "What do we live for if not to make life less difficult for others?"

One of the writers of this curriculum decided to respect everybody she met for six weeks—shop clerks, nurses and doctors, teens in fast food restaurants, customs agents—by using their correct names, or by using Sir or Ma'am. It worked in an amazing way: people became extremely helpful, offering their own opinions and their own stories. It felt so good that she has continued to use those greetings. But the big thing is, all kinds of doors opened for her, all kinds of people wanted to help her, and all kinds of great things came her way because of it.

Your assignment today is to think about your own feelings and write at least a paragraph about how you feel when people respect you and how you feel about yourself when you are able to respect other people in a meaningful way.

**Teacher:** Allow time for the activity. Have them read their paragraphs aloud and discuss their perceptions. Ask the students to read *Guide to a Positive Life* Student Text, Unit 4, Chapter 28, "What Do I Respect?" as homework.

Positive Feelings



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**Use the positive action of respect to help resolve conflict.** As we work to resolve conflict, we'll find it works better if we treat one another with respect. When we have a conflict with another person, it's easy to not want to treat him or her with respect. Conflict is difficult, if not impossible, to resolve if we do not treat others with respect. Respect is a positive action that will help us resolve conflict with others.

**Ways we like to be treated:**

- ◆ We like others to treat us with respect. So we must treat others with respect.
- ◆ We like to be treated with respect even if others don't like our actions. So we need to treat others with respect even if we don't like their actions.
- ◆ We like to be treated with respect regardless of age, race, religion, culture, or language. So we need to treat others with respect regardless of these things.
- ◆ We like others to treat us with respect by acting in courteous ways, calling us by our right name,

listening to what we say, and paying attention to what we need and want. So we need to treat others in these same courteous ways.

**Ways we don't like to be treated:**

- ◆ We don't like to be treated disrespectfully. So we must not treat others disrespectfully.
- ◆ We don't like others to be insincere in their respect for us. So we must not be insincere in our respect for others.
- ◆ We don't like to be called disrespectful names or have disrespectful language directed our way. So we must not call others disrespectful names or use disrespectful language with them.
- ◆ We don't like to be ignored or treated as if we don't matter. So we must not ignore others or treat them as if they don't matter.

As you think about a conflict in your life right now, can you see how the positive action of respect would help you as you work to resolve the conflict?

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## Teacher's Toolbox

### Vocabulary

#### Hate Crime

A crime motivated by prejudice against a social group.

### Word of the Week

#### Kindness

To care for others and take thoughtful actions.

# Chapter 28

## What Do I Respect?

**Goals:** To learn that the social and emotional positive action of treating others with respect creates a positive, healthy social climate and a solid sense of worth for you and others.

Respect means recognizing the worth of other people, perspectives, religions, and cultures, even if those experiences are different from your own. How you give and receive respect has a lot to do with who you are. Your social and emotional identity and character is determined by how you behave. Teenagers who can act with respect are more likely to be mature, courageous, and self-directed individuals. Those who disrespect other people, property, or the ideals of the community will have significant trouble their entire lives until they can get that part of their lives under conscious control.



*Where am I on the respect-disrespect continuum? Am I mostly respectful of other people, their property, and their ideals? Or am I more disrespectful?*

Respect means you take people seriously. You take care of people, animals, property, and your environment. You take care of yourself, because you realize that it all matters. You matter. Your actions matter.

Practicing respect creates positive relationships between people. It's the arena where decisions can be made in a healthy fashion, where actions that benefit everyone can be discovered. Respect

creates a safe community for learning and achieving, and does away with racist or sexist behaviors and attitudes. Respect for others embraces the differences between people.

All of the other social and emotional positive actions require respect: empathy, love, kindness, fairness, cooperation, and positive communication.



*How do I treat the environment, other people, animals, and property? How could I improve those behaviors?*

On the other hand, disrespect includes behaviors such as ignoring people or their requests, calling people names, being rude, sexually harassing someone, and making disparaging verbal attacks. It includes violence or destruction. At the worst of times, disrespect can be intense, personal, or particularly mean-spirited.

What those disrespectful attitudes and behaviors suggest is that the sender has a negative self-concept, a harmed character or core essence. They can only send disrespect into the world, because they disrespect themselves. Life can get very complicated and difficult for them.



*What disrespectful behaviors can I turn around? What respectful behaviors can I initiate?*

Learning social and emotional positive actions and behaviors is the easy way to turn disrespect around. It's not that you have to be best friends with everyone; that's not realistic. Nor is it realistic to think you will agree with everyone. But treating everybody with respect is an essential requirement for healthy, sane, safe relationships. Treating people with respect means you speak and act in ways that tell other people they matter; you pay attention to what they are saying, why they feel the way they feel, and how they are saying it.

Sometimes, you'll disagree with decisions made by your parents, teachers, or other authority figures.

This is a result of needing to establish your own identity, to establish yourself as a person separate from your family, and to question everything. All of that is normal, but it is still necessary for you to respect their decisions by following their rules. If you feel that something needs to be changed, talk to them about it calmly and rationally. Learn how to question things in such a way that opens earnest dialogue and real discussion.

The goal, of course, is to create an environment of safety, learning, and community. When you treat others with respect, you thrive and so do others. When you treat others disrespectfully, they don't do very well and neither do you. By respecting everyone, you share a sense of worth, belonging, and understanding. That is the only real path to safety and success.

# Lesson 91

## Why Is My Own Truth So Important?

Positive Thoughts

**Goal:** ♦ To learn the social and emotional positive action of telling others and ourselves the truth.

**Objectives:** ♦ To suggest that telling the truth to ourselves is a foundation for emotional and social health.  
♦ To explore the outcomes of “lying to ourselves.”  
♦ To explore the outcomes of “telling ourselves the truth.”

MATERIALS	
	<b>Needed</b>
✓	Pens
✓	Paper
	<b>Provided</b>
✓	None

### Procedure

**Say:** Let’s pretend for a minute. You’ve done something that could come back and bite you. You have a couple of choices. If you lie about it, maybe people will forget about it and you skate. If you tell the truth, even to yourself, you are going to be in pain. It will be ugly. What would you do? And why?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** If there’s a universal human malady, it’s trying to deal with the truth about what’s going on in our lives. Often we knowingly fudge the facts, but if the pain is deep, searing, and long-lasting, then something in our brain may push our truth aside and cover it up. But, because on a subconscious level we still are aware of it, we may act out in self-destructive ways, such as through promiscuity, substance abuse, and lack of achievement.

How do we recover from that?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: To heal, we have to tell the truth to ourselves and others, we have to make amends to people we’ve harmed, and we have to refocus on positive actions to create a life we like. Sometimes we can do that by ourselves, sometimes we need help from others.

**Say:** The universal human remedy is telling ourselves the truth about our thoughts, actions, and feelings. Self-honesty is the positive action that all the other *Positive Action* concepts revolve around and that life revolves around. It is foundational for success and happiness. None of the *Positive Action* concepts work without self-honesty. What is self-honesty?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: Knowing what is real about ourselves and the environment we live in.

**Say:** What are some of the ways we can lie to ourselves?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses and include:

- ♦ Evasion: saying something happened, but avoiding the important details.
- ♦ *DENIAL*: saying it didn’t happen, and believing that.





- ◆ Rationalization: making up reasons for why something happened.
- ◆ Not telling the whole truth: telling only the parts of the story you can tolerate, most often not owning our thoughts and actions.
- ◆ Distraction: changing the subject, like wrecking the car to take the focus away from bad grades.
- ◆ Intentionally saying one thing; intentionally doing another.

**Say:** What is the big drawback to using any of these strategies?

**Teacher:** Wait for answers. Guide toward: They are really easy to catch, especially if the significant adults in your life are paying attention.

**Say:** One young person decided to tell a whopper of a lie. He completely copied, or plagiarized, another person's paper he found on the internet and submitted it for his final paper for Senior English. The teacher spotted it immediately, because the writing style was nothing like the student's, and the research was impeccable, which was also unlike the student's previous work. All the instructor did was type in the first line of the paper on an internet search engine and the whole paper came up, word for word. The instructor confronted the student, showed him the evidence and failed him on the spot. In order to graduate, the student had to retake the class in the summer—a big price to pay for failing to do ten or twelve hours of work.

Why are these kinds of lies dangerous?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: Usually one lie leads to another, to continue hiding the truth. This escalates and complicates the problem.

**Say:** It takes intense effort to straighten out problems once someone has misled themselves and others, and their self-concept takes a real beating. What can happen to teens when they fall into a pattern of lying and deception?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: They may “act out,” tell even bigger lies, abuse drugs and/or alcohol. It becomes a negative circle. They often also feel depressed, anxious, angry, or distracted.

**Say:** To turn this around, a person needs to own their truth, and do what is required to make things right. They come out of the other side bruised, but much smarter about themselves and their lives. Now I'd like you to write for five minutes about three things that most bother you about your life. Examples: your relationships, your self-image, problems with other teens, with money, with your grades. You can simply describe them. I will not ask you to share these things in class.

**Teacher:** Do the activity.

**Say:** We tell ourselves the truth in many different ways. The positive action of telling the truth can really help us: We recognize our strengths and weaknesses. We do what we say we'll do. We admit our mistakes and refuse to blame others. We refuse to rationalize, we acknowledge the truth, and we express what we are really feeling. By telling ourselves the truth and taking responsibility for our thoughts and actions, we do more than survive; we thrive.



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# Teacher's-Toolbox

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## Vocabulary

### Denial

Avoiding the truth, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously.

## Teacher's Inspiration

*"To thine own self be true  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou cannot then be false to any man."* –William Shakespeare

This is why we still venerate Shakespeare. He tells complicated truths in sharp, clear, and beautiful language. His plays provide powerful examples of the consequences of deception and of truth.

# Lesson 96

## How Do I Figure Me Out?

**Goal:** ♦ To reflect on the social and emotional positive action of telling ourselves the truth about our strengths and weaknesses.

**Objectives:** ♦ To explore physical, intellectual, emotional, and social strengths and weaknesses  
♦ To discuss ways to apply strengths to a problem.

**MATERIALS**

### Needed

- ✓ Pens
- ✓ Paper

### Provided

- ✓ *Guide to a Positive Life*  
Student Texts, Chapter 32

## Procedure

**Say:** Do you think most teens know how strong and talented they are? Or in what areas they might be gifted?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** Some people are well-rounded; there may not be much difference from strength to strength. Other people are spiky, projecting great talents in some areas and inversions or weaknesses in other areas. Both are normal.

Let's talk about physical strengths. This can cover a whole range of physical abilities; chefs or perfumers who have an intense sense of smell; people who are talented at cleaning and organizing; people who have strong motor skills, like doctors or firemen; people like physical therapists who have incredibly sensitive hands. Can you think of others?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Ask the students to write about two or three physical areas where they personally do well.

**Say:** The intellectual area seems obvious, but there are different kinds of strengths in that area, too. Some examples are being interested in math, science, art, history, technology, or politics. Maybe you are an astute reader. Maybe you are gifted at creating something new, like inventors or artists. Or perhaps you're excellent at analysis or problem-solving. Strong interests in such things indicates someone who loves to learn; a life-long student of the world. What are some others?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Ask the students to write about two or three intellectual areas where they personally do well.

**Say:** Next, let's look at our emotional lives. This has to do with our most personal strengths. This area includes our self-concept, our character, how truthful we are with ourselves. This is called our *INTRAPERSONAL* relationship, our relationship with ourselves. Some strengths in those areas might be taking responsibility for our thoughts and our actions, telling ourselves the truth, doing what we say we will do, knowing who we are and what we want to do with our lives, and managing ourselves by being on task and on time with our own lives. Can you think of other aspects of a strong intrapersonal relationship?

Positive Feelings



**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Ask the students to write about two or three emotional areas where they personally do well.

**Say:** Last, let's look at our social intelligence or how well we get along with others, which is our *INTERPERSONAL* relationships. That includes kindness, cooperation, respect, fairness, empathy, love, and positive communication, along with the ability to share resources, show appreciation, be a team player, respect property, have a sense of humor, and use civility and manners. Can you think of others?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Ask the students to write about two or three social areas where they personally do well.

Allow time for the activity. Ask the students to share their lists. If the other students notice a strength that rings true for them, ask them to add it to their lists.

**Say:** Let's read *Guide to a Positive Life* Student Text, Unit 5, Chapter 32, "Where Am I Strong? Where Do I Struggle?"

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## Teacher's Toolbox

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### Vocabulary

#### Interpersonal

Relationships with others.

#### Intrapersonal

A relationship with yourself.

### Word of the Week

#### Truth

Something you can count on.

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# Chapter 32

## Where Am I Strong? Where Do I Struggle?

**Goals:** To learn that the social and emotional positive action of recognizing your strengths and weaknesses creates a positive, healthy identity and character, helps you make decisions about your future, and helps you feel good about yourself and others.

Everyone thinks a little differently because of their unique neurological makeup. Your neurons fire along different neural pathways, depending upon what your brain has been exposed to and your genetic makeup.

One student can be great in math, poor at wrestling. Another can be wonderful at figuring out the logic of software, but not so good at getting along with other people. Recognizing your strengths and weaknesses is looking at what you are good at and what makes you happy, and looking at things that are a chore or a bore. It really helps to know the difference so you can focus on your strengths and ask for help in the areas where you're lacking.

Everyone has strengths and weaknesses in each of their physical, intellectual, social, and emotional areas. What's tricky is figuring out what those are.

For example, in the physical domain, you might be good at athletics, but miserable at cleaning up your room. In the intellectual domain, you might be great at analytical thinking, but creative thinking doesn't come easily. In the social domain, you might be good at respect, but empathy might not feel real to you. In the emotional domain, you might be good at doing what you say you will do, but you might also be too hard on yourself when things don't go well.



*What is a key strength and a key weakness of mine in each area?*

Sometimes your strengths and weaknesses aren't easily apparent. Try considering what makes you happy or unhappy, challenged or bored. Or think about the classes in which you excel and the ones you don't, or things that you are naturally drawn to versus things you naturally avoid. You can even take IQ tests, aptitude/assessment tests, and personality tests. It may take awhile to discover where you're strong, but keep trying. Giving up and getting involved with drugs and alcohol because nothing excites you might mean you miss the chance to be a genius in music or science. It's a life lost—your life.



*What do I want to do well? What weakness could I convert to a strength with a little work?*

If you charted your strengths and weaknesses on a graph and then compared them with other people's, you would see that others have strong and weak points as well. As you acknowledge your strengths and weaknesses, it's important that you don't beat up on yourself for the things you struggle with. They are what make you human, and a little vulnerable. A very few people are good at most everything.

You just do the best you can with what you are given. If it's going to make a big difference in your life—say you're bad with money management or what you're

eating is making you gain a lot of weight—then learn everything you can, practice at every opportunity so your thoughts, actions, and feelings are more positive in those areas—and you will get a lot better. You can take a weakness that drives you crazy and polish it into a strength.

And be sure to enjoy the things that you're good at. Learn everything you can. Take every opportunity to participate. Get better and better.

Your strengths are exactly the skills, attitudes, talents, intelligences, and passions that the world needs.



*What life could I gain by focusing  
on my strengths? How can I make  
plans for my future and enhance  
my chances for success?*

# Lesson 118

## What Is Potential?

**Goal:** ♦ To learn the social and emotional positive action of learning about who we are by believing in our potential—physically, intellectually, socially, and emotionally.

**Objectives:** ♦ To explore the concept of believing in our potential.  
 ♦ To discuss the relationship between self-concept and belief in our potential.  
 ♦ To identify physical, intellectual, social, and emotional positive potentials.

MATERIALS

### Needed

- ✓ Pens
- ✓ Paper

### Provided

- ✓ None

## Procedure

**Say:** Why do people use terms like: “That guy has a lot of potential” or “We see a lot of potential in her”? What do they mean by “potential”?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: “Potential” refers to the ability or capacity for growth and development; what might be possible if we work to develop it.

**Say:** We all have potential in every area of our lives, but it is like an iceberg. Only a small portion of it shows. We rarely use all of our capabilities—our talents, skills, and abilities. We might not recognize how smart, caring, talented, or funny we are. Something within ourselves or our environment might blind us to our potential. Or we might not have been exposed to the one critical thing we need to know or do. Does that feel true to you?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** Sometimes we think of potential as a special *CAPABILITY*, such as what artists, athletes, or scientists have. But it’s more than that. To learn about our potentials, we will need to broaden our thinking. What are some ways to broaden our thinking?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: Explore new things. Take classes or lessons to learn something new, like a sport or craft. Travel somewhere you haven’t been before. Volunteer for an organization in your community. Read books, magazines, web sites about things that interest you.

**Say:** How can doing positive actions influence our belief in our potential?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: By doing positive actions to broaden our vision of ourselves, we strengthen our self-concept—and we learn more about who we are and what we are capable of doing. We begin to see possibilities, potential in ourselves.

**Say:** We are far more talented and capable than we imagine. We need to believe in our potential because it’s an attitude that helps us see possibilities for ourselves. We can explore all the things we might like to do, learn everything we can learn, experience as many different



aspects of life as we can: the arts, sports, business, design, science, mechanics, electronics —everything. We can give our potential every chance to express itself. How does believing in our potential help us achieve our goals?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: If we don't believe we can; we can't. If we believe we can, we'll usually find a way.

**Say:** Now, get a piece of paper and list eight potentials you see in yourself: two each for the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional arenas.

**Teacher:** Do the activity. Have students share two or three of their potentials. Encourage them to suggest potentials for each other.

**Say:** As you explore your potentials, you will do well at some things and not so well at others. But that's okay, it's normal. Don't look at it as failure; see it as feedback. In time, you'll begin to discover what works for you.

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## Teacher's Toolbox

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### Vocabulary

#### Capability

The ability, skill, and the power to do a certain thing.

### Teacher's Inspiration

*"There are only three colors, ten digits, and seven notes; it's what we do with them that's important."*

—Ruth Ross

*"If you wish to make an apple pie from scratch, you must first create the universe."*

—Carl Sagan

We all begin with the basics and work from there.

# Lesson 124

## How Do I See Problems?

Positive Thoughts

**Goal:** ♦ To learn the social and emotional positive action of learning who we are by turning problems into opportunities.

**Objectives:** ♦ To discuss the role attitudes play in the perceptions of problems.  
♦ To explore problems as opportunities for developing a skill set or knowledge base.  
♦ To decrease the discomfort surrounding problems by discussing the universal nature of problems.

**MATERIALS**

<b>Needed</b>
✓ None
<b>Provided</b>
✓ None

### Procedure

**Say:** If there's one sure thing about setting goals and working toward them, it's this: there are going to be problems. A pessimist may say that life is just one big problem after another; an optimist would say it is just one opportunity after another. A humorist would *EXPLOIT* the difference. What challenges have you encountered lately that seemed to be one big problem after another? Have some of them been funny, too?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** Positive thinkers acknowledge the reality of a problem, and then explore the possibilities for learning something new or doing something in a better way, thus creating an opportunity.

Without the ability to look at problems in a new way, we won't always find our way around them, and might get stuck. When that happens, many people whine or complain about the situation. But does whining or complaining help?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: No, it's a distraction from what really needs to be done. Too often people focus on whining and complaining instead of resolving the problem.

**Say:** Why is whining and complaining a problem?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Guide toward: Because when we whine and complain, we give away our power, and in doing so shirk our responsibility. This usually just compounds the problem.

**Say:** Thinking that we shouldn't have problems or challenges is an *ILLUSION* that hampers our growth and development. Everyone has problems and challenges. Some people are deluged with them. Do you think you are one of those people? Raise your hands.

**Teacher:** Wait for responses. Reinforce the notion that life does bring many problems and challenges.

**Say:** One way to deal with problems and challenges is to change the way we think about them. We can think of our problems as opportunities, and our stumbling blocks as stepping stones.





That doesn't mean we suddenly get happy because we have a problem or we turn it into a game. That doesn't respect the seriousness of our problems. But if we look at our problems as an opportunity to gain a new skill set or a new knowledge base, then our brain, which requires reality to be happy, will accept the problem and send us in the direction of a possible solution. Have you ever had a problem and then reframed your perceptions in a way that helped you resolve it?

**Teacher:** Wait for responses.

**Say:** Albert Einstein said we couldn't resolve a problem at the level it was created. That means we might not be able to solve the problem with what we know now. We might need to learn something else. When we take our thoughts to a more positive level, then we are more likely to see a potential pathway, and understand what skills or knowledge we need to solve the problem.

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## Teacher's Toolbox

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### Vocabulary

#### Exploit

To use or to take advantage of for one's own ends.

#### Illusion

A mistaken belief. A visual image that is deceptive or deceiving.

### Teacher's Inspiration

*"Keep doing what you're doing and you'll keep getting what you're getting."* —Anonymous

*"Each problem that I solved became a rule which served afterwards to solve other problems."*  
—Rene Descartes

You have to do what you want to be.



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