Lesson 6: Positive and creative thinking

Level: Pre-intermediate +
Time: 60 - 90 mins

Life and language skills: Creativity and resourcefulness, optimism and positive thinking, speaking, presenting

Materials: Notebook or learning journal for students

How to use this lesson:

This lesson is about building self-awareness and encourages students to think about their creativity and positive thinking skills and to find ways to use them day-to-day.

This lesson can be done in class but if you are short of time, parts of the lesson can be done at home.

Try to allow time in class for students to discuss the different exercises. This will give them useful practice with asking and answering questions, as well as an opportunity to use the lesson vocabulary.

Lead-in – 15 minutes

1. Ask students what item they think has all the uses listed on the handout Q.1.

   What one item do you think can be used to do the following nine things?

   As a drinking straw; a hole puncher through paper; a wire guide; a finger splint; a toothpick; a paint stirrer; a whistle; a ruler; a compass (Answer: a ballpoint pen)

2. Next, get the class in groups to brainstorm a list of everyday objects that are in the room that they think might have more than one use eg. ‘pencil’, ‘chair’, ‘cup’, ‘bag’ etc. The list should be kept to objects, not the construction of the room, such as ‘wall’, ‘floor’ etc. Write the list they give you down one side of the whiteboard.

   Split the class into groups/pairs and allocate an object to each group/pair. Ask them to think of as many uses for this everyday object as possible. Give them two minutes to do this (a time limit gives them a deadline to work to and encourages on-target talking). For lower-ability students, allow them to use a dictionary to express their ideas. Remind the students to try and come up with as many ideas as possible.

3. Ask each group to feed back all their ideas or to act them out (to a round of applause).

Exercise 1 – 15 minutes

Write in the middle of the whiteboard the word ‘being’. Ask students to think about what they did during that exercise to have more than one idea, what sorts of skills they were using. Have students give their answers and write these on the board around the word ‘being’. See the example to the right.

Next, write the words ‘resourceful, creative, positive’ round the word ‘being’ and link the most appropriate of the three words to the responses they gave you. You will have created a spidergram (also called a mind map). Use this opportunity to further explain the words ‘resourceful’, ‘creative’ and ‘positive’. Develop this idea by asking students to give you examples of a creative person, a resourceful person, a positive person. Add key phrases/vocabulary to the spidergram on the board.

Split into groups again and ask students to discuss why these sorts of skills – being a resourceful/creative/positive person – might be important in today’s world.

To encourage all students to have spoken in this section, do some ‘popcorn’ feedback: one student says why one of the skills is important and then points at another student who then can choose to say something or can say “pass”. If you like you can give students a ‘talking stick’ – which can be a piece of rolled up cardboard – only the student with the talking stick can speak or say “pass” and hand the stick to the next person!
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Exercise 2 – 20 minutes

Yes, and….

This activity opens up the storytelling voice, creativity and language use. Ask the students to get into groups of 3 or 4 people.

Explain they are going to create their own story and that they will need to be creative. Each person in the group will have to speak and each will have to add something to the story. (You may decide the story should include specific tenses or grammar structures depending on your students’ ability level.)

The first person begins a story. It can be totally made up, or it can contain an object from the lead-in activity and ideas from Exercise 1. This student tells enough of a story to establish some content. For lower abilities suggest a number of sentences, for higher abilities give them a time limit (30-90 seconds) per person.

The first person stops speaking at the end of a sentence. The second speaker in the group picks up the story with the words “Yes, and”, and then adds new content to the story – maybe 4-5 sentences or 45 seconds – again ending at the end of a sentence. The third person picks up the story with “Yes, and”, and this process continues on around the group. To have a complete story it may be necessary for the story to go round the group a second or third time. The important thing is for students to fully accept the content of the story as it has unfolded and build on it. The story should not end on a ‘cliff hanger’ but have a positive outcome.

It can be useful to start this exercise by demonstrating this to the class with one of your confident students starting the story and you being the second speaker.

(If your students are preparing for spoken exams, they will find this type of activity builds their confidence in listening, speaking and helps them have an idea of speaking for a specific time.)

After all the groups have completed at least one story, ask them again what skills they were using – this should lead back to being resourceful, positive and creative.

Exercise 3

The Positive Game

Get the whole group to brainstorm some negative events that have happened to them. It can be anything, for example “I did not get the job”, or “I lost the game” – the main thing is that the negative events come from the students. Erase the list of items from Exercise 1 (cup, bag etc.) and in their place, write the negative events.

Review the ideas from the board and the key words: being resourceful, creative, positive. Ask students to think about some of the negative things that have been mentioned. How would they feel? Can they think of anything resourceful, creative or positive to say?

Allow students a few moments to think about possible answers.

Where class size permits, have your students sit in a circle or divide the class into groups.

The first person in the circle states their negative event plus an emotional response: “I didn’t get the job and I’m upset.” The other students in the circle then respond by starting off with a phrase such as “But now that I did not get the job, I have more time to….”, filling in the sentence with a positive word or phrase such as “think about what I really want to do” or “start my own business”. Encourage creativity and resourcefulness!

For lower-ability students it’s a good idea to rehearse some phrases with students first – so decide together how you want this sentence to begin. Make use of this time to focus on any grammar or vocabulary needs before you can start the exercise fully.

For students entering work, remind them at interview this technique of being positive about setbacks is essential.

If time is short, ask students to take three of the negative situations and write a response that’s resourceful, creative, and/or positive to each one for homework.

Homework activity: Learning journal reflection

Ask students to reflect:

1. What skills did I use in these exercises today?
2. When are there other times in my life I can use these skills?
3. What two things will I do as a result of my learning today?
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Q.1. What one item do you think can be used for the following nine things?

- a drinking straw
- a hole-puncher through paper
- a wire guide
- a finger splint
- a tooth pick
- a paint stirrer
- a whistle
- a ruler
- a compass

Answer:

Q.2. Everyday uses for ____________________________

1.
2.
3.
4.

Homework activity: Learning journal reflection

Think about the following questions:

1. What skills did I use in these exercises today?

2. When are there other times in my life I can use these skills?

3. What two things will I do as a result of my learning today?