

PREP

Overview

High school students tend to focus on what is going wrong rather than what is going right. In this lesson, students will create gratitude journals and use these to keep track of all the things for which they're grateful, focusing on how to find the silver lining.

Objectives

- Understand that we all have much to be grateful for.
- Identify and list the things for which we're personally grateful by starting a gratitude journal.
- Learn to seek the positive in a negative situation or circumstance.

Required Materials

- Journal, pen or pencil, sheet of paper

SEL Alignments

- **Social-Awareness** – Students gain greater perspectives on the positive influences and support structures in their lives.
- **Relationship Skills** – Students learn specific approaches to developing positive and meaningful relationships with others.
- **Resilience** – By building a more positive perspective of others, students gain greater levels of confidence in the support structures around them.

Step 1: Get Their Attention

Section	Displayed	Instructions
Quote: (1 min)	“Life is not a matter of holding good cards, but of playing a poor hand well.” -Robert Louis Stevenson	Display the quote. Have a student volunteer read it to the class. <i>Suggestion:</i> If students were given a challenge in the previous class, ask students to share their experiences. Prompt: What do you think this quote means?
Icebreaker: (5-10 min) <i>Optional</i>	A List of Thanks	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Challenge students to write down as many things as possible that they're thankful for in two or three minutes.2. When time is up, ask them to take turns sharing. Find out who wrote down the most.3. Give students one additional minute to identify additional things they are grateful for, but this time, challenge them to identify some less obvious answers. These could be things we may take for granted, such as clean air to breathe, water to drink, and healthy legs to walk on.4. When time is up, find out who got the most and ask them to share.5. To take this exercise a step further, give the students another minute to identify one seemingly negative thing that has happened to them, and then list some positives that could be taken from the experience. If appropriate, ask some of the students to share. <p><i>Note:</i> You may want to suggest that the students keep the sheets with their first gratitude lists to include in their gratitude journals.</p>

Section	Displayed	Instructions
Hook: (2-4 min)	How does focusing on the positive things in life diffuse the negative?	<p><i>Suggestion:</i> Give students one to two minutes to share their thoughts with the student beside them</p> <p>Prompt: We all have choices. We can either focus on the good or bad things in life. Focusing on the positives will make them a central part of our lives and help put us on the path to our dreams. However, if we devote our thoughts to regret, jealousy, anger, and confusion, these negative elements will occupy an increasingly dominant space in our lives, meaning we'll experience more and more negative circumstances.</p> <p>Simply be more grateful! As often as you can, think about all the good things in your world, both what you have and what's still to come. And try to focus on being thankful for those things regardless of what else is going on in your life.</p>
Video: (1-2 min)	Attitude of Gratitude Scribing Video Video Link	<p>Prompt before showing the video: Over 2.5 billion people in the world live on less than two dollars a day. More than 780 million people are without access to clean drinking water, and 1.5 billion people live with no electricity. There are many things we should be grateful for on a regular basis, don't you think?</p> <p>Today we'll begin thinking about those things for which we're personally grateful, particularly those which we may take for granted.</p> <p><i>Suggestion:</i> Give students a moment to reflect on the video. If they have thoughts or questions, allow them to share.</p>

Step 2: Make the Connection

Section	Displayed	Instructions
Video: (4-5 min)	The Only Disability in Life is a Bad Attitude Video Video Link	<i>Suggestion:</i> Give students a moment to reflect on the video. If they have thoughts or questions, allow them to share.
Discussion: (5-7 min)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What comes to mind after watching this video?2. What would life be like for Matthew Jeffers if he believed his circumstances were a disability?3. What happens when you focus on the negative?4. How does having a positive attitude give you a better quality of life?	<p><i>Suggestion:</i> For all discussions, choose the most appropriate option or combination of options from the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Think/Pair/Share – Students find partners and discuss together.• Student Facilitation – Break students into smaller groups and have one student per group act as discussion facilitator.• Large Group Discussion – Facilitate discussion with entire class, making sure to involve as many students as possible. <p><i>Suggestion:</i> If meaningful student sharing is taking place, feel free to forego some of the following activities or possibly assign them as homework.</p>

Step 3: Transition to Life

Section	Displayed	Instructions
Journal: (5 min)	In your journal, respond to the following: “Think about something negative that has happened in your life. What are some ways you can keep a positive attitude about it?”	<p><i>Suggestion:</i> Give students three to five minutes to complete this activity.</p> <p><i>Suggestion:</i> If you are able, play music while they reflect on this question. Let students choose the song from the class playlist or the Song List in the Resource Hub. Song suggestion: “What a Wonderful World” by Louis Armstrong.</p>
Discussion: (2-3 min)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who would like to share what they wrote? • Any final comments or questions? 	<p><i>Suggestion:</i> Teacher may have to share to get things started. After a student shares, make sure to celebrate them taking a risk and thank them for sharing. The teacher may also choose to break the students into small groups.</p>
Activity: (1-2 min) <i>Optional</i>	Gallery Wall: Delete the Negative	<p><i>Suggestion:</i> On the piece of paper with their dream in the middle, have students write one negative thing that has happened to them and then cross it out.</p>
Challenge: (1-2 min) <i>Optional</i>	Maintain a positive attitude, even if (especially when) things aren’t going well.	<p><i>Suggestion:</i> Be looking for student artifacts or stories to share or post in the classroom or hallway.</p> <p>Prompt: Next time, we will learn the importance of expressing gratitude.</p> <p>Prompt: Feel free to tell me anything that inspires you and might inspire others in the class.</p>