

The Kindness Curriculum Educators notes

Positivity

Positivity is the practice of focussing one's mind affirmatively on the good and constructive aspects of a matter to exclude negative or destructive attitudes and emotions. Having a positive mindset is a mental and emotional attitude suggests an optimistic rather than pessimistic outlook on life – "Is your glass half-empty or half-full?" Researchers continue to explore the effects of positive thinking and optimism suggesting the benefits include lower rates of depression and levels of distress; better psychological and physical well-being. The positive thinking that usually comes with optimism is a key part of effective stress management.

A person with a positive mindset encourages and motivate others making them feel good which builds friendly, caring and safe environments. Positivity can change the way one feels about themselves and others, which can in turn have a huge effect on the well-being of all. Positivity is a state of mind we would all like to achieve which is lucky because it is also a skill that improves with use. The activities sourced and designed provide children and students opportunities to explore ways to think and act positively. Becoming positive and optimistic is a skill that will assist students to engage in happy and healthy relationships, be confident with a 'can do' attitude!

Kindness and positivity are powerful concepts and actions! Positivity embraces thinking in an optimistic way and adopting a positive frame of mind. There are many traits and characteristics associated with a positive mindset including: gratitude, mindfulness, integrity, optimism, acceptance, and resilience. Researchers continue to explore the benefits of positive thinking and optimism on health which include better psychological and physical well-being; lower rates of depression; lower levels of distress; better coping skills during hardships and stress; and better relationships and conflict management. Being positive also awakens happiness; increases your motivation; promotes a sense of self-esteem, self-confidence and inner strength; and improves physical health. While positivity embraces a positive frame of mind it does not mean that negative feelings are not experienced or ignored. It is essential to acknowledge unpleasant and difficult feelings, learn from them and use the knowledge gained to improve the self.

The classroom environment is one of the most important factors affecting student learning and their social emotional development. Children and student learning is enhanced when the learning environment is considered positive and supportive. Positive people and spaces support feelings of belonging, satisfaction, trust, and safety in risk taking occurs (Bucholz & Sheffler, 2009). Positivity also supports people to build social skills and strategies that help them to engage and succeed in everyday life.



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Research indicates that positivity boosts wellness in the workplace. Recognising the value of positive organisational behaviour in the workplace promotes authentic leader behaviours, organisational integrity, psychological capital and supports job performance. Optimistic people are also happier and more involved in their work, have coping abilities and are more likely to overcome diversity. Ways that positivity can be promoted in the workforce include practicing thankfulness during teamwork; showing gratitude; mutual appreciation and respect; using positive messaging in face to face and online communication; having awareness of and commitment to the team mission; and acknowledge accomplishments.

Positivity builds resilience and spreading feelings of positivity will not only strengthen an individual's mindset but will contribute to the mindset of others. In all contexts a positive frame of mind can benefit individuals as optimism supports:

- Inspiration and creative thinking
- Perseverance and determination
- Self-belief
- Expectations of success and achievement
- Solution and action orientated work ethics
- Self-esteem and confidence

Kindness and the inherent positivity behind it have been scientifically linked to improved mental health and happiness therefore an essential focus in the ever-changing contemporary world!

References

- Bucholz, J. L., & Sheffler, J. L. (2009). Creating a Warm and Inclusive Classroom Environment: Planning for All Children to Feel Welcome, *Electronic Journal for Inclusive Education*, 2 (4).



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