

Guideposts for Success: Lesson Plans and Activities

Developed by the Institute for Educational Leadership

LESSON 24: KEEPING YOURSELF ABOVE WATER IN A SEA OF PESSIMISM

AT-A-GLANCE

Negativity is all around us. Not allowing ourselves to get “sucked into” it is an important skill for all young leaders to work to develop. We all deal with negative people in our lives, whether it be at home, at school or at work. Negativity has a way of oozing its way into different folds of life...and can truly corrupt an environment. How do you become strategic in dealing with these types of people?

Icebreaker Quote

The secret of a leader lies in the tests he has faced over the whole course of his life and the habit of action he develops in meeting those tests.

-Gail Sheehy

Icebreaker Discussion

What do you think Sheehy means by a “habit of action?” What types of “tests” might leaders be faced with? What do you think the most difficult part of being a leader might be?

Lesson/Activity

Ask participants to give examples of negativity in the world (at home, at school or at work). What makes someone negative? Do you know people who get “sucked in” to negativity? What are the ramifications? Is it possible to stay positive all of the time?

Use the negativity types below as a discussion point. It is suggested that you write each “type” on a separate index card or sentence strip or piece of paper. Then, write the descriptions on separate index cards or papers. Make a few sets so many groups can match the type with the description at the same time.

Negativity Types

TYPE	THESE PEOPLE...
The Resisters	... try to stop anything different
The Wobblers	... constantly shift their moods and expect others to adjust
The Gossipers	... spread rumors and tell others personal things about someone else
The Blamers	... always blame someone else
The Victims	... always think someone is out to “get” them
The Adhesives	... just don’t let go...even if something happened a long time ago
The Pessimists	... always expect the worst thing to happen
The Complainers	... feel everything is wrong or will soon go wrong
The Choosers	... are always trying to pit one group against another group
The Detached	...feel most everything is “stupid” or beneath them
The Self-Absorbed	... are always trying to grab the attention or the credit

Guideposts for Success: Lesson Plans and Activities Developed by the Institute for Educational Leadership

The Boilers	... blow up over the littlest frustration
-------------	---

As a group, discuss the types of negative behavior. Then, brainstorm ways that leaders can deal with each type. The goal is to end up with a list of helpful strategies for dealing with negativity.

Reflection

Even if someone is being negative, is their opinion of value? How might you find ways to value someone's opinion if you don't believe it to be true?

Extension

This lesson offers an opportunity to discuss the fact that we can't change or control other people...all we can do is learn to control our reactions to others.