

Extra-Curricular Activity: Weakness and Strength – Introducing the idea that what appears as a strength in one context might be a weakness in another and vice versa

<p>Description of educational activity:</p>	<p>Duration: 1 class period (45 minutes) Pupils' age: 10-12 Organisation of the class: Individuals, pairs and then class-as-a-whole.</p> <p>Pupils' task: Step 1: Students are divided in pairs. It is best to choose a partner they feel comfortable with as this activity involves supporting one another. At the same time it is best to choose a partner that they are not the closest with in class (i.e. their best friend) in order to get a chance to relate deeper with someone they haven't had a chance to do so until now. Step 2: Each student first works individually and writes down: a) his/her 3 personal characteristics that he/she considers as his/her main strengths, and b) his/her 3 personal characteristics that he/she considers as his/her main weaknesses. Step 3: Students work in pairs: They share with each other their two lists of 3 perceived strengths and 3 perceived weaknesses. Their task is to come up with examples of ways in which each of these 12 items (6 "weaknesses" and 6 "strengths") could turn into the opposite, i.e. when a certain "weakness" becomes a "strength" and vice versa. E.g. if a student lists "courage" as one of his/her strengths, they can come up with an example for when being courageous can lead his/her to take an unnecessary risk like jumping down a high wall; or if a student lists "being timid" as one of his/her weaknesses, then they can come up with an example for when being timid can make others feel less threatened and more likely to approach his/her, etc. They may use the form "I value my _____ (fill with perceived weakness here) because it may help _____ (fill with example where it can be useful)"; and "I am careful of my _____ (fill with perceived strength here) because it may lead to _____ (fill with example where it can be not so useful). (see materials section below) Step 4: Class discussion: Class reconvenes as a whole and students share examples of weaknesses that turn into strengths and strengths that turn into weaknesses while you (the teacher) records the answers on the board. Discuss these examples with the class noting <i>the consequences that this new understanding of strengths and</i></p>
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	<p><i>weaknesses</i> has for the phenomenon of bullying (see <i>Effect of the activity</i> right below, and <i>objectives</i> section below).</p> <p>Evaluation and assessment method: The activity will be assessed on the basis of the quality of the examples of weaknesses turning into strengths and vice versa. At the end of the class discussion the students can nominate the top 3 weaknesses that can act as strengths and the top 3 strengths that can act as weaknesses.</p> <p>Effect of the activity on increasing the capacity and raising awareness in combating bullying: This activity targets one of the basic misconceptions behind bullying, namely that there are clear-cut “strengths” and “weaknesses” or that a person is either “strong” or “weak”. Children who engage in bullying, either from the perspective of the child who bullies, or of the perspective of the child who is being bullied (and even from the perspective of the child who witnesses), operate under the faulty assumption that certain children or characteristics are the “strong ones” and certain other children or characteristics are “the weak ones”, and bullying becomes a way of manifesting that perceived power imbalance. By actively reflecting on and challenging this false assumption, this activity aims to undermine the very basis on which bullying occurs, and to foster respect for differences, thus making it less likely for bullying to occur.</p>
<p>Tags:</p>	<p>Bullying related to Differences (Race, Ethnicity, Disability, Spirituality, etc.), Bullying related to Perceived Power Imbalance, Strengths, Weaknesses</p>
<p>Objectives:</p>	<p>This activity intends to enable students to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore the concepts of weakness and strength; 2. Reflect on the factors that make us call a certain characteristic a weakness rather than a strength (and vice versa); 3. Acknowledge that a characteristic that we consider a weakness can also act as a strength, and vice versa (i.e. abandon the black-or-white way of thinking about strengths and weaknesses); 4. Realise that differences enrich us and should be celebrated and that bullying someone on the basis of his/her weaknesses is narrow-minded.
<p>Material:</p>	<p>Pencil and paper for note taking (or electronic equivalent for note taking), board (for class brainstorming). To facilitate the activity you can create a sheet that will contain:</p> <p>Student form to prepare (optional)</p>

	<p>My 3 main strengths: 1) 2) 3)</p> <p>My 3 main weaknesses 1) 2) 3)</p> <p>Copy 3 times: “I value my _____ (fill with perceived weakness here) because it may help... _____ (fill with example where it can be useful)”</p> <p>Copy 3 times: “I am careful of my _____ (fill with perceived strength here) because it may lead to... _____ (fill with example where it can be not so useful)”</p>
<p>Notes for the teacher:</p>	<p>When students work in pairs, ask them to begin with turning the weaknesses into strengths before they move on to turning the strengths into weaknesses (we chose this order in order to build up their confidence before they challenge what they already consider as strengths). <i>NOTE: It is important to note that this activity does not aim to make children feel less proud of characteristics which they consider strengths but rather to move away from the black-and-white thinking that a characteristic is definitely either a strength or a weakness.</i></p>
<p>Recommendations for additional activities:</p>	<p>Students can create personal cards or posters (or notes on their phone/computer if that is applicable) reminding themselves how one or more of their perceived weaknesses can also be their strengths. E.g. a card/poster stating: “<i>I value my shyness because it allows me time to observe and understand others.</i>” The students can draw/decorate their cards/posters.</p>