

Monitoring Negativity

Overview:

Students are made aware of the power of negative thoughts and become more responsible for the effects that emotion has on their actions. (Note: If you want to incorporate a journal-writing activity into this assignment, be aware that sensitive information may be conveyed — and may require your responsible intervention.)

Materials:

- Paper, pencils, or pens

Procedure:

1. Inform students that the class is going to figure out ways to avoid negative thinking in difficult situations. Discuss how thoughts and feelings influence actions.
2. Explain that thoughts and feelings are not done to us; each individual is responsible for his or her own outlook. Say: It's our responsibility to be aware of what we think and feel because thoughts and feelings are powerful and influence our words and behavior.
3. Part of being responsible is exercising self-control — not just over what we do but over what we think and say. Unfortunately, many people don't know that, or they forget it when their emotions get the best of them.
4. Discuss how we are responsible for our attitudes and behavior and for getting rid of negativity in thought and word. Say: It's not bad or wrong to be angry or have a negative thought about some situation or person, but the best way to deal with that is to confront the situation or person respectfully and directly. Don't let these thoughts eat away at you and cause you to treat others unkindly.
5. Have the students highlight and discuss ways to combat negative feelings in specific situations. Here is a quote to enliven the discussion:

“Anger is never without a reason, but seldom a good one.” — Benjamin Franklin

This lesson is from the *Good Ideas* book, available for purchase from the CHARACTER COUNTS! online store: <http://www.charactercounts.org/materials>

Adapted from *Developing Character-Building Values* by John Gust (Good Apple, Carthage, IL), 1995.

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McREL standards

Life Skills

Standard 2. Uses conflict-resolution techniques.

Level IV, Benchmark 3. Understands the impact of criticism on psychological state, emotional state, habitual behavior, and beliefs.

<http://www.mcrel.org/Standards-benchmarks/>