

Character and Life Skills

Video Title: Patience, Self Management

Lesson Title: Sabotage and Support

Grade Level: High School



Project and Purpose

Students write about, discuss, and role play concepts of sabotage and support examine ideas of patience in the face of struggle and adversity.

Essential Question

How do messages of sabotage and support impact patience?

Room Set Up

- Individual writing into open playing space.
- Recommendation: Begin with desks/tables to the side of the room, with chairs to the side but accessible. Pull out chairs for writing (and discussion, if desired).

Materials

- Writing materials
- Chart paper (5-7 pieces)

Procedure

1. Begin by talking about the challenges and support Heather received and how they might have tested her patience. Explain that in this session, students will write, discuss, and role play situations to build connections among sabotage, support, and patience.
2. Have students do a quick write exercise for three minutes to respond to the prompt: What kinds of things have you been told that discourage you in your goals?
3. At the end of three minutes, have students turn to a partner and share their responses.
4. Discuss as a full group: What does sabotage mean? (*Solicit responses, eventually getting to: undermining, destroying.*)
5. Explain to students that sabotage isn't always obvious, and it's not always necessarily mean spirited. It's not even always intentional. However, it always does the same thing: undermines the purpose.
6. Ask students to think about ways students know to distract teachers. [Insert personal stories here, e.g. My French teacher was also my volleyball coach, so asking about next week's game killed a good 15 minutes of class; my students know that talking about *Orange is the New Black* will get me off topic every time.] (*Solicit other responses, if desired.*)

7. Point out that none of the examples was malicious, or even particularly calculated, but the person didn't reach a goal [In the example, the person did not end up learning much French that year]. The students sabotaged it because they stopped what was happening from moving forward.
8. Next have them think about how the next 40 minutes could be sabotaged. What kinds of actions could students take to keep today from being productive? (*Solicit responses. Eg. Not paying attention, leaving class.*)
9. As an example, walk over to a student and say, "[Name of student], tell me you have an idea." After or during the response, roll eyes dramatically at student's idea.
10. Say: *I didn't say anything to [name of student]. I didn't "do anything." It's a small enough thing that if you called me on it, I could deny it. But that pretty much shot down what [name of student] had to say, and chances are she won't be as ready to volunteer an idea again. Or if [name of other student] saw me roll my eyes, she might make a note to herself that I'm not that supportive.*
11. Conduct a whip around and have each student say, "I can sabotage this class by..." and insert an example. Students who 'can't think of anything' should echo something already said they feel is common and/or important.
12. After the whip around, have students consider the opposite of sabotage – support. Ask: How can students keep what's supposed to be happening moving forward?
13. Repeat the whip around, but open with "I can support this group by ...", coming up with both words and actions. Students might think of the opposite of their sabotage idea, or, again, echo something they feel is common/important.
14. Bring the discussion to specific examples of sabotage and support in the students' lives. Ask:
 - What kinds of statements have you heard that make you feel discouraged in your goals? This can be any kind of goal, e.g. making the basketball team or getting an A on a test or going to the college of choice, etc.
 - Who says these things?
 - Where do these voices come from? (*Solicit: parents, teachers, peers, media, self.*)
 - Brainstorm and record responses.
15. In another area on the chart/board, brainstorm and record what students think are five goals that you think are pretty common for high school students. Generalize where possible, e.g. "going to Harvard" might become "going to the school of your choice."
16. On each of five pieces of chart paper, write one of the goals. Post the papers in different parts of the room. Ask for a volunteer to stand under the paper/goal of their choice.
17. Ask for four more volunteers. Assign a role to each volunteer: friend, family member, teacher, and self.
18. Explain that they will play the saboteur team. The volunteer, friend, family member, and teacher are going to try to keep the volunteer playing "self" from reaching their goal by saying things that might discourage them. Instruct each saboteur to come up with one statement that their assigned character might make that would discourage [volunteer/self]. Remind students that sabotage isn't always unkind; a well-meaning parent might say something trying to be helpful that actually makes you want to give up.
 - It's important to stress here that this is not personal, but in character. Saboteurs are not trying to come up with specifics that relate to the volunteer/self, but statements they think many young people are likely to hear.

