


THE UMBRELLA PROJECT

Empowering Students to Choose Emotional Wellbeing

REALISTIC OPTIMISM

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Lesson Plan..... 3
 - Module Overview 3
 - Learning Outcomes..... 3
 - Materials and Resources 3
 - Topics and Subtopics..... 4
 - Teaching and Learning Activities: Part 1 5
 - Teaching and Learning Activities: Part 2 6
- Lesson Content 8
 - What is Realistic optimism? 8
 - Why Does Realistic optimism Matter? How Does it Help Us? 8
 - Research Based Outcomes of Realistic optimism 8
 - How to Find Stories of Realistic optimism..... 9
 - Examples of Stories About Realistic optimism..... 9
- Appendix A: Handouts..... 11
 - The Umbrella Project: Realistic optimism 12
 - Story Capture: Realistic optimism..... 14

LESSON PLAN

MODULE OVERVIEW

The goal of this module is for students to recognize examples of realistic optimism in their own lives and to identify the benefits and challenges of demonstrating realistic optimism. This lesson will be delivered in two parts: An in-class lesson the first week and a peer-to-peer discussion period the following week.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this module, students should be able to:

1. Define realistic optimism
2. Illustrate the use of realistic optimism in the context of emotional wellbeing
3. Identify the use of realistic optimism in the students' day to day interactions, proximal environment and the world around them

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

Resources to guide discussions (see Lesson Content):

- What is the definition of realistic optimism?
- Why does realistic optimism matter? How does it help us?
- Specific research on the benefits of using realistic optimism
- Themes to locate stories about realistic optimism
- Videos highlighting realistic optimism
- Questions to accompany the video for teacher led discussion

Handouts (see Appendix A):

- The Umbrella Project (Realistic optimism)
- Story Capture: Realistic optimism

TOPICS AND SUBTOPICS

Part 1: Introduction to Realistic optimism

- Defining realistic optimism
- How does realistic optimism improve wellbeing?
- How to find stories that exemplify the use of realistic optimism in problem solving, stress management and wellbeing
- Exercise – reflecting on personal use of realistic optimism
- Examples of realistic optimism (videos/narrative examples of stories that highlight the current skill)

Optional: For teachers to share as appropriate

- Narrative/thoughtful questions to accompany the video or story of realistic optimism provided

Part 2: Peer to Peer Sharing of Stories Highlighting the Role of Realistic optimism in Emotional Wellbeing

- Small and large group discussion
- Template for personal umbrella book

TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PART 1

Approximate duration: 40 mins

#	Activity	Lesson Content	Materials & Resources	Duration
1	Individual exercise: Begin the module by asking students to write down what they think the definition of the “realistic optimism” is and how it might help people take on challenges and deal with stress. Ask for a few volunteers to share their answers.		Pen and paper	5 mins
2	Lecture/Group discussion: Share the definitions of the realistic optimism provided and some of the research about that skill (see resources and materials). Have students take a moment to think about how these answers compare to their own. Did anyone mention any benefits that you hadn’t considered?	<p>What is Realistic optimism?</p> <p>Why does Realistic optimism Matter? How Does it Help Us?</p> <p>Research Based Outcomes of Realistic optimism</p>		5 mins
3	Videos/Reflection: View video and news articles of stories relating to realistic optimism. Ask questions from the provided list to reflect on after the video.	Examples of Stories about Realistic optimism	<p>Video and news articles related to realistic optimism.</p> <p>Questions related to the video and news reports</p>	10 mins
4	Reflection: Have students think of an example of a time when they didn’t use realistic optimism. Have them reflect on how that situation affected them and the people around them (this can be done as a written exercise or just in their heads). Then have them think of an example when they have used realistic optimism and how that experience was different. Students can share this positive experience with a classmate or		Pen and paper	10 mins

	write it in their journal.			
5	Lecture/Group Discussion: Give students the Umbrella Project: Realistic optimism handout (see Appendix A). Explain the requirements of this weeks' assignment: Ask students' to find one example of realistic optimism over the following week. Examples may be found through the range of multimedia and personal interactions they will have (potential sources include documentaries/movies, newspaper, magazines, novels, social media, websites, community events, school speakers, peers, personal stories, teachers, families, community members). Lead a discussion and share themes to look for in identifying stories that demonstrate realistic optimism.	How to Find Stories of Realistic optimism	Umbrella Project: Realistic optimism (handout) Story Capture: Realistic optimism (handout)	5
6	Wrap-Up and Questions: Summarize key points of the module and answer questions.			5 mins

TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PART 2

Approximate duration: 50 mins

#	Activity	Lesson Content	Materials & Resources	Duration
1	Recap: Reiterate the key points from the previous session and ask students if they have any questions/comments.			5 mins
2	Group activity (part 1): Ask students to split into their pre-assigned groups or tribes to discuss the week's experience in finding stories about realistic optimism. Each student will take a turn			15 mins

	sharing the story they have brought to the group.			
3	Group activity (part 2): Within small groups, ask students to discuss any challenges they had identifying realistic optimism, the benefits they found to using the skill and any challenges they reflected on about that skill (i.e. Why don't people use realistic optimism all the time?)			5 mins
4	Large group discussion: Initiate a large group discussion about realistic optimism in the module. Ask students to volunteer to share the story they found with the class or their experience of seeking this story. Ask students to share what they found the major benefits were to using realistic optimism and any challenges the group identified. This can be done through a group spokesperson or on a volunteer basis.			10 mins
5	Individual activity: Handout the Story Capture: Realistic optimism template to each student and give students time at the end of the session to record one story (either their own or another that resonated) to be added to their personal umbrella skills book and reflect on opportunities they have to build realistic optimism.		Pen and template for recording stories	10
6	Wrap-Up and Questions: Summarize key points of the module and answer questions. Emphasize how students may apply this new skill in their daily life. Briefly introduce the umbrella skill you will talk about the following week and link the two topics.			5 mins

LESSON CONTENT

WHAT IS REALISTIC OPTIMISM?

- Belief that you will success with the right inputs like hard work and careful planning
- The tendency to look at the favourable side of events
- Expecting the best while preparing for obstacles
- A relatively stable expectation that good things will happen instead of bad
- Attention to positive information, active engagement, positive reframing and problem solving

WHY DOES REALISTIC OPTIMISM MATTER? HOW DOES IT HELP US?

We often hear sayings about looking on the bright side of life. Turns out that looking on the bright side can actually help our lives seem brighter. Mix that with a realistic look at obstacles and you have a strategy for success.

Realistic optimism mixes the belief that good things will happen with the knowledge that obstacles are a part of life and should be prepared for. It helps us link our dreams to the steps we will need to take to achieve them and helps us create a plan. Success can be challenging and if we defeat ourselves in our minds with a negative outlook before we get started it can really hurt our chances of reaching our goals.

RESEARCH BASED OUTCOMES OF OPTIMISM

1. Can lead to better health
2. Helps us live longer
3. Leads to higher grades
4. Helps us cope with stress
5. Increases our courage
6. Can lead to higher levels of creativity
7. Energizes us to reach future goals



HOW TO FIND STORIES OF REALISTIC OPTIMISM

Much like the idea of expecting some rain and building a strong umbrella to protect you, realistic optimism helps us stay positive and see challenges as a normal part of achieving our goals. People who use this strategy to improve their wellbeing will often talk about knowing that their road to success was going to involve challenges but believing they would be able to overcome them. These stories are about people reframing life in a positive way.

Themes:

- Thinking positive
- Preparing for challenges
- Expecting some rain in life with a positive attitude
- Positive reframing
- Looking on the bright side

EXAMPLES OF STORIES ABOUT REALISTIC OPTIMISM

***Please Note - The Umbrella Project is being used with a range of different classrooms. The videos have been selected to demonstrate both examples of the rain of life and the use of the umbrella skills and because of this, can touch on mature themes. Each classroom is unique, so please use your own judgement to select the videos that will best teach the skills to your class.*
**

1. For the love of the land – The couple who replanted the rainforest

<https://www.greatbigstory.com/stories/bringing-the-land-back-to-life>

2. Terminally Optimistic – Celebrating life by confronting death

<https://www.greatbigstory.com/stories/this-dying-teen-uses-youtube-to-talk-about-life>

3. A photographers mission to capture a new image of Africa

<https://www.greatbigstory.com/stories/a-photographer-s-mission-to-capture-a-new-image-of-africa>

Suggested discussion question to accompany stories:

- a. The umbrella skills help you get through life's rain and take on new challenges. Is there an example of rain in this story? (something outside the persons control?) What about a new challenge?
- b. How does the skill we are studying play a role in the story you just watched? How did it improve wellbeing for the person using this skill? How did it improve the wellbeing of others?
- c. Practicing the umbrella skills helps us use them more in our lives. How might this persons' experience help them in other ways throughout their lives?
- d. Our umbrella of emotional wellbeing is made up of many skills. At any given time we use the ones that best help us overcome the obstacle we are facing. What are the challenges of using this skill? When could this skill help us the most?
- e. Did you notice any other umbrella skills in this video?

APPENDIX A: HANDOUTS

Handouts for this module include:

1. The Umbrella Project: Realistic optimism
2. Story Capture: Realistic optimism

THE UMBRELLA PROJECT: REALISTIC OPTIMISM

WHAT IS REALISTIC OPTIMISM?

- Belief that you will success with the right inputs like hard work and careful planning
- The tendency to look at the favourable side of events
- Expecting the best while preparing for obstacles
- A relatively stable expectation that good things will happen instead of bad
- Attention to positive information, active engagement, positive reframing and problem solving

WHY DOES REALISTIC OPTIMISM MATTER? HOW DOES IT HELP US?

We often hear sayings about looking on the bright side of life. Turns out that looking on the bright side can actually help our lives seem brighter. Mix that with a realistic look at obstacles and you have a strategy for success.

Realistic optimism mixes the belief that good things will happen with the knowledge that obstacles are a part of life and should be prepared for. It helps us link our dreams to the steps we will need to take to achieve them and helps us create a plan. Success can be challenging and if we defeat ourselves in our minds with a negative outlook before we get started it can really hurt our chances of reaching our goals.

RESEARCH BASED OUTCOMES OF OPTIMISM

8. Can lead to better health
9. Helps us live longer
10. Leads to higher grades
11. Helps us cope with stress
12. Increases our courage
13. Can lead to higher levels of creativity
14. Energizes us to reach future goals



HOW TO FIND STORIES OF REALISTIC OPTIMISM

Much like the idea of expecting some rain and building a strong umbrella to protect you, realistic optimism helps us stay positive and see challenges as a normal part of achieving our goals. People who use this strategy to improve their wellbeing will often talk about knowing that their road to success was going to involve challenges but believing they would be able to overcome them. These stories are about people reframing life in a positive way.

Themes:

- Thinking positive
- Preparing for challenges
- Expecting some rain in life with a positive attitude
- Positive reframing
- Looking on the bright side

“Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened.”
- Dr. Seuss



STORY CAPTURE: REALISTIC OPTIMISM

Date:

STORY

Record a meaningful story about how you or someone else showed realistic optimism – this could be a story that you found or one shared by a classmate.

How did realistic optimism benefit the person using it? What might have happened if this person had not used realistic optimism? How would this story have been different?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Opportunities for me to practice realistic optimism.

- 1.
- 2.