



*“Hope can be a powerful force.  
Maybe there’s no actual magic in it, but when you  
know what you hope for most and hold it like a light  
within you, you can make things happen,  
almost like magic.”*

*~Laini Taylor, Daughter of Smoke and Bone*

## Lesson #6: Discussing Hope

### Topic: **Review or Introduction on Hope.**

#### **Teacher Notes**

##### **Materials needed**

Hope Sunflower Individual Student Worksheet (may be obtained from Lesson One)

Hope Journal



##### **Step by Step teaching guide**

##### **Teacher Prompt:**

- 1) Part A: Classrooms that received Fall Lessons 1-5 will use Part A: Hope Review during Lesson 6 Instruction Time
- 2) Part B: Classrooms who are beginning Hope curriculum in the spring will use Part B: Introduction on Hope during Lesson 6 Instruction Time

##### **Part A: Hope Review: A Recap of Fall Lessons 1-5 (Only use for students and classrooms who have received fall instruction)**

In the fall, we had a unit on Hope. We are now going to start our spring unit on Hope. First, let’s review what we learned in the fall.

##### Lesson One Review: What is Hope?

We began our lessons talking about hope and discovered that having hope is a very important skill you can learn and use every day. The more you practice your hope skills, the better you are at living your life.

We learned about various definitions of hope and then created our own definition of hope on our sunflower displayed in our classroom.

- a) Read classroom hope definition.
- b) Did you look to the classroom sunflower to remind you of hope? Was the reminder helpful?

Next, you each created your own definition of hope and placed it on your own sunflower worksheet.

- a) Do you remember what hope means to you?

**Teacher Prompt:** Students may share their own definition if they would like to with the class.

- If you harvested sunflowers as an activity and received messages of hope you may also ask the following questions.

1. Do you remember harvesting the sunflowers the other students had planted for you? Do you remember their messages of hope? How did that make you feel to receive those messages?

#### Lesson Two Review: Why Is Hope Important?

We also talked about success and why hope is important.

- a) Can success mean more than just having nice things or lots of money?

The amount of money you have, how many friends you have, what your family is like, or where you live does not determine if you are hopeful. You can build hope within yourself no matter what, and then once you have it, hope will help you thrive in your life.

- b) Why do you think hope is important? (Possible answers: Hope makes us emotionally strong, connects us with others, overcome challenging situations, keep moving forward)

#### Lesson Three Review: The Brain and Hope

- a) Does anyone remember what part of the brain that helps us learn and be hopeful? (Answer: Upstairs Brain)

The Upstairs Brain controls more complicated actions and emotions like good decision making, self-understanding, and empathy. We use our upstairs brain to learn new things and when we feel hope.

- b) What does the downstairs brain control?

- 1) The downstairs brain controls our survival instincts. It is here where our body has the fight or flight reaction to a danger or threat.
- 2) When the downstairs brain takes over, our upstairs brain shuts down. This means that if we are angry, upset, scared, or frustrated, it can really be difficult to learn and retain information. It's also hard to make good choices and it is challenging to see our hope.

Remember: We can use a tool to help identify our distress level to help us know when our downstairs brain may be taking over and we need to take action to help ourselves. Distress is any emotion/feeling that you **do not** want such as fear, anger, sadness, or frustration. On a scale of 1-10,

rate how you are feeling. 0 is not feeling any distress and 10 is feeling intense or strong feelings of distress. When we reach a 7 or higher, this is when we want to practice our hope tools.

#### Lesson Four Review: How to Create a Hopeful Mind

In the fall, we practiced some exercises that can help us stay in our upstairs brain and remain hopeful. Most we can practice anywhere and at any time.

- a) Do you remember a tool you may use to help you find your hope?

Examples may be deep breathing, visualization, meditation, or journaling positive things.

#### Lesson Five Review: Hopeful Purpose

An important aspect of a strong hope foundation is knowing that you have a purpose and are an important person. Recognizing what you like to do helps discover your purpose. There is no purpose better than another.

- a) What do you love doing? Art, sports, being with friends, writing stories, playing an instrument? Has pursuing your passion given you a sense of purpose? Review your answer on your sunflower. Have you discovered something new you enjoy? Sometimes our passions may change or we may have more than one. The most important thing to remember is to pursue them.

### **Part B: Introduction on Hope (Only students and Classrooms who are beginning the Schools for Hope program who have not had previous lessons 1-5)**

Note: This introduction is taken and modified from Lessons 1-5. This introduction may take longer than the 30 minute allotted time frame depending on discussion length of each lesson step. Recommended time for instruction is one hour.

## Lesson Steps

- 1) Today we are going to begin lessons on hope because hope is a very important skill that you can learn. You can use it every day in whatever you do.

Hope is like running. The more you run, the better you get at it. The better you are at running, the better you are at other activities such as baseball, soccer, hockey, dance, or gymnastics. The more you practice your hope skills, the better they become. The better your hope skills are, the better you are at living your life.

- a) What does it feel like for you to be hopeful? Is there something happening soon that you are excited for and hopeful about?

Here are some ways people describe what hope means.

\*Dr. Shane Lopez, a hope expert, says that hope is the feeling you have when you have a goal, are excited about achieving that goal, and then you figure out how you achieve your goal.<sup>i</sup>

\*The Merriam Webster Dictionary says that hope is a feeling of wanting something to happen and thinking that it can happen.<sup>ii</sup>

\*Dr. Anthony Scioli explains that hope is a part of a person's character or personality. You are not born with hope. Hope must be developed, like a set of muscles. There are types of hope that have special purposes. Hope can be used to build and keep trusting relationships, help us stay calm and find ways out of difficult situations, support us in becoming strong and successful and give us a sense of extra protection when we need it.

## Activity

Pass out an individual student sunflower worksheet. Please have students write their own definition of hope in the center of their sunflower.

### 2) Why is Hope Important?

Did you know that people who have hope do better in life? Hopeful people have better grades, they do better in their jobs, and they have closer relationships with friends and family.<sup>iii</sup>

Hope is a characteristic we can learn and develop. The amount of money you have, how many friends you have, what your family is like, or where you live does not determine if you are hopeful. You can build hope yourself no matter what, and then once you have it, hope will thrive in your life.

We will be learning some skills and tools to help us have hope that we can take with us anywhere. The more we practice these skills, the more hopeful we will become, and then more successful too.

### 3) How to Create a Hopeful Mind

Did you know there are different parts of our brain that affect our thoughts and feelings?

- a) Can you remember times when you were angry, upset or frustrated and it seemed you couldn't control how you acted?
- b) Can you think of a time when you were focused and remember what you learned?

There are two areas of the brain called the upstairs and downstairs brain.

Upstairs Brain: Helps us make good decisions, gives us control over our feelings/emotions and our body, and helps us understand the feelings of others (empathy). We use it to learn new things and when we feel hope. We want to stay in the upstairs brain.

Downstairs Brain: Controls our survivor instincts. This part of the brain is important to keep us safe when we are in danger and helps us react if we are in trouble. We feel strong emotions like anger and fear.

For example, if a lion were attacking a zebra, the zebra must react quickly to fight the lion or run away to escape the danger. The zebra cannot spend much time thinking about what to do. It must just react to survive.

This means when we are in the downstairs brain if we feel angry, upset, scared or frustrated, it can be really difficult to learn and remember information. It's hard to make good choices and have hope.

In order to have hope, we need to stay in our upstairs brain rather than letting our downstairs brain take over.

#### Tools We Can Use to Help Us Stay Hopeful

There are tools we can use to help us calm down when we are feeling intense emotions like fear and anger.

1. **Deep Breathing.** This calms our body and nervous system down. Breathe in deeply and breathe out so that you hear the air coming out. This helps get us back in the upstairs brain.
2. **Visualization.** Close your eyes and think of one thing that makes you happy. Try to hold this image in your mind for at least 30 seconds. This often helps us calm down, improve how we feel, and become more hopeful.
3. Writing down what you are thankful for or keeping a **gratitude journal**. When you pay attention to 3 things a day you are grateful for, you are focusing on what is good in your life. This helps us stay hopeful even if there are events out of our control that challenge our hope.
4. **Meditation.** Find a quiet place, keep your body still, and focus only on breathing. If it helps when you are beginning, you can count to five in your head as you breathe in, and count to five in your head as you breathe out. The goal is to quiet your mind/thoughts. Meditating helps our memory, relaxes us, improves our sleep, increases our creativity, and is good for our emotional well-being.
5. Doing **creative activities**. Playing, using your imagination to make up stories, art projects, or playing a musical instrument or just some creative ways to help release our tension and stress.

## Activity

On student sunflower, have students look at the examples of tools they may use to help calm down, stay in their upstairs brain, and remain hopeful.

- a) On the designated petal, have them write one tool they will use to have hope.
- b) Next, have them write a time that they can use their hope tool.

### 4) Hopeful Purpose

An important aspect of a strong hope foundation is knowing that you have a purpose and are an important person. Recognizing what you like to do helps discover your purpose. There is no purpose better than another.

## Activity

Have students write down one activity that they enjoy doing and are passionate about on their student sunflower.

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<sup>i</sup> See University of Minnesota (2013), video interview with Dr. Lopez

<sup>ii</sup> See Merriam-Webster

<sup>iii</sup> See Lopez (2013), p. 53-61