



# Exploring Leadership

## ADAPTABILITY: OPTIMISM

Optimism is a mindset that helps you focus on the good, even when life gets tough. The word comes from the Latin word *optimum*, meaning “the best.” When someone tells you to “look on the bright side,” they’re encouraging you to be hopeful and positive—even during hard times. Life can be full of challenges, but optimistic people learn to push through. They build confidence and find strength by choosing to believe things will get better.

### CONVERSATION STARTERS:

Display a clear glass filled halfway with water. Ask: “Would you say the glass is half-full or half-empty? The way you answer might say something about how you see the world. Are you someone who looks for the good—or do you expect the worst?”

Optimism brings a lot of benefits for young people. It helps with your mental and physical health, boosts your school performance, and gives you strength during tough times. It even builds your self-esteem. When you think positively, you're more likely to bounce back from setbacks and keep moving forward, no matter what life throws at you.

### KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Use positive self-talk to build an optimistic mindset.
- Practice replacing negative thoughts with more positive ones.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- 1 roll of toilet paper per group of 4–6
- A clear glass and water (for conversation starter)
- Pens or pencils
- Optional: visual aids or quote cards with optimistic sayings

## EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

This activity helps you practice optimism by replacing negative thoughts with positive ones—one square at a time.

### FACILITATOR TIPS:

- This might remind you of a party game—but this version helps us turn negatives into positives. Have fun with it!
- Don't reveal the purpose of the toilet paper too soon. The surprise adds impact and helps participants reflect more deeply.

- Divide participants into groups of 4–6 and give each group one roll of toilet paper.
- Say: “Pass the roll around and take as many squares as you think you’ll need.” (Keep it vague for now—the surprise makes it fun!)
- Once everyone has taken their squares, explain: For each square they took, they must think of a negative experience and replace it with an optimistic thought.
- Give examples like these:
  - “I failed a test” becomes “I’ll study harder next time.”
  - “My parents expect too much” becomes “They want me to succeed.”
  - “I had a hard breakup” becomes “I’ll meet someone better.”
- Wrap up by saying: “When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.” That’s what we’re doing here. We’re looking on the bright side, finding the silver lining in the dark clouds, and making the best of a bad situation. In other words, we’re practicing optimism—even when life feels like it’s in the toilet.



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Ask the open-ended questions below to your group, engaging in a discussion about what happened during the activity.

- What was it like to turn a negative thought into a positive one? Was it harder or easier than you expected?
- Were there any negative thoughts that were tough to turn around? What did that teach you about your thinking habits?
- Why do you think people sometimes struggle to “see the bright side”?
- How did it feel to focus on the positive instead of the negative?

## APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- What are some real-life benefits of being an optimistic person?
- How could you use positive self-talk in your everyday life—like during a test, a game, or a family disagreement?
- Why might an optimistic leader be better at helping others through tough situations?



## CONCLUSION:

Setbacks happen to everyone. But being optimistic means knowing that problems are temporary—and they don’t define you. Even when things feel overwhelming, you have the power to choose how to respond. Optimism doesn’t ignore hard stuff; it gives you hope that things can get better. When you learn to change your thoughts, you also change your future. Remember, you’re not powerless. You can always choose to see the good—and that choice makes all the difference.

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## REFERENCES

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