

PART I

CREATING A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

GETTING STARTED

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WHAT IS OVERCOMING OBSTACLES?



AGENDA

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- Identifying Obstacles
- A Day in a Life
- A Day in My Life
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will identify the specific skills they will learn and practice through the Overcoming Obstacles course.

Students will recognize how they will apply these skills to their everyday lives.

Materials Needed

- One copy of the “Table of Contents” activity sheet for each student (Parts I–III)
- One copy of the “A Day in a Life” activity sheet for each student (Parts II and III)
- Slips of paper with job titles students might hold in the future (Part III)
- A hat (Part III)

Starter (3 minutes)

Invite students to make a list of activities they enjoy doing that require practice to do well (e.g., playing a sport or musical instrument, ballet, tap dancing). Read the following scenario out loud:

At band practice, your teacher only talks about the song you're learning, but does so without explaining what he is doing. You're expected to learn by listening and watching. You never play an instrument until the day of the first concert.

Ask students to comment on the effectiveness of this method of learning. Ask students how well they think they'd do when asked to perform without practicing first. (Students might respond: although you might learn some fundamentals, you can't learn just by watching; you need to practice to improve your technique; you need to know where your skills are weak so you know what to work on.)

Point out that for many of the most important skills we need in life, we don't always get sufficient practice before we're expected to demonstrate them. Often, they are skills we learn by watching others, which students have determined is not the best way to learn. Invite the class to suggest what some of these life skills might be. If students are unsure, explain that this lesson will help them identify these skills and how they apply to students' lives now and in the future.

Explain to students that the Overcoming Obstacles course will give them an opportunity to learn and to practice skills they need to succeed in school, at home, in their communities, and on the job.

Part I Identifying Obstacles (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students analyze the program title "Overcoming Obstacles" by identifying common obstacles in daily life.

1. Students define "obstacle" and explore options for dealing with obstacles.

Write "obstacle" on the board. Ask students to define the word. Relate the word to concrete experiences. Ask students to visualize a time when they were driving, hiking, or riding a bike and came upon something that was an obstacle to continuing on their way. Ask, "What did you do about the obstacle?" Invite students to share their experiences and solutions, such as moving the object, going around it, or finding an alternative route to reach their destination.

Explain to students that while they are likely to encounter such physical obstacles, they are just as likely to experience many "life obstacles," some of which can be very damaging. Brainstorm with students examples of these life obstacles, such as emotional roadblocks that they encounter in their relationships with friends and family members. For example, have students identify an obstacle that may occur between friends that must be overcome for the friendship to continue. Write their responses on the board.

2. Students review the table of contents for the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum and define “life skills.”

Distribute copies of the “Table of Contents” activity sheet to students and have them review it (or have them access the activity sheet through their electronic devices). Explain to students that the table of contents lists skills that they will be developing and practicing in this class. Encourage students to comment on what is covered in the curriculum and why these topics are called life skills. Have students define the phrase “life skills.”

3. Students anticipate the benefits of the Overcoming Obstacles course.

Ask students to consider why this course is called Overcoming Obstacles. Refer students to the list of obstacles they’ve identified on the board. Invite volunteers to suggest ways that the particular skills they’ll be learning can help them find ways around life’s obstacles, just as they’d find a way around a fallen tree or a concrete barrier in their path.

Part II A Day in a Life (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students explore the relevance of the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum by analyzing the activities and life skills that are part of a fictional student’s day.

1. Students review a fictional student’s day.

Have students work in pairs. Either give each student a copy of the “A Day in a Life” activity sheet or share electronically. Review the sheet with students to be sure they understand that it is the schedule for a fictional student, Camilla Juarez. Tell students that they will also need the “Table of Contents” activity sheet.

Explain that most of our daily activities are a series of actions and decisions. Waking up in the morning, for example, requires deciding what hour to get up in order to get to school or a job on time and remembering to set the alarm the night before.

2. Students analyze which life skills are used by a fictional character.

Ask students to analyze Camilla’s day. Next to each activity, they should list skills from the “Table of Contents” activity sheet that are relevant to that activity. If students are unsure about the specific content of some lessons, have them make their best guess. Suggest that they focus on the skills that may result in more positive outcomes for Camilla.

Ask students to share the specific skills they listed for each of Camilla’s activities. Encourage discussion about the kinds of obstacles Camilla is facing on this particular day. Have them predict how practicing the skills that Overcoming Obstacles offers could help Camilla overcome her challenges and obstacles.

Part III A Day in My Life (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students explore the relevance of the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum by analyzing how the skills it offers are useful in their own lives.

1. Students recognize how the life skills they will learn through Overcoming Obstacles apply to their daily activities.

Have students repeat the previous activity, this time working alone and substituting activities in their own lives for Camilla's. Have students list on a sheet of paper 10 activities in their daily schedule. They may include some of the same activities from the "A Day in a Life" activity sheet but should also include at least two specific issues that they are dealing with at this time (e.g., getting a better grade on the next math test).

Ask students to jot down notes for each activity identifying the skills from the "Table of Contents" activity sheet that they would use to successfully complete it. Have them comment on how applying the skills they will develop through the Overcoming Obstacles course will help them to become more successful.

Invite students to share examples of ways in which the skills they will learn through Overcoming Obstacles apply to their own lives. Suggest that students save their notes and responses to this activity. As they progress through the curriculum, they can return to their notes from this discussion to check how their mastery of the life skills they are learning is deepening.

2. Students identify skills that will prepare them for potential obstacles that may arise on the job.

Give the class one minute to arrange themselves into small groups of three to five students. Place the slips of paper with the job titles in a hat. Pass the hat around and have each student draw one slip.

Have students work in their groups to identify the jobs they have drawn, name obstacles they might face in those jobs, and identify life skills they will develop in this class that could help them overcome those obstacles. Encourage students to help each other identify obstacles and relevant life skills.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to name some of the skills they will learn in this course. Elicit from students the following key points that were taught in this lesson:

- The Overcoming Obstacles course is about the life skills that are relevant to success at home, at school, with peers, and on the job.
- The Overcoming Obstacles course allows students to learn and practice these skills, helping them to overcome obstacles in their daily lives.
- The Overcoming Obstacles curriculum is relevant to students' lives now and in the future as adults.

Student Assessment

1. Describe an obstacle you have faced in your life. What skills helped you overcome this obstacle?
2. What skills would you most like to learn in this course?

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“Practice makes perfect.” –Pablo Casals, world-famous cellist who practiced six hours a day

Have students write about why they think Casals practiced every day. As a class, discuss why it is important for students to practice the skills they will learn through this course.

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Ask students to make a pie chart that shows how they allot their time in a typical day. Have students identify the relevant skills they use during each activity represented on the chart.

Writing in Your Journal

Introduce students to the idea of a journal. Discuss the importance of writing down thoughts and feelings. Ask students to begin a journal with the following question: “What does overcoming obstacles mean to you?” Have students discuss what they have written with a partner.

Using Technology

Ask students to research a profession of their choice on online and identify the relevant life skills needed for that job. Have students share their work with the class.

Homework

Ask students to interview adults about their jobs. Students should find out which life skills the adults use on the job, how they learned these skills, and why these skills are important.

Additional Resources

Have students read sections of *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank or *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou, identifying the obstacles faced and how they were overcome.

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1. Introduction
2. Getting Started
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5. Taking Action
6. Assessment

A DAY IN A LIFE

Camilla Juarez is a high school senior. The following are the activities she has planned for today.

Where	Time	Activity	Related Overcoming Obstacles Lessons
Home	6:15 AM	1. Wake up.	
	6:25 AM	2. Take a shower and get dressed.	
	6:45 AM	3. Eat breakfast.	
	6:55 AM	4. Get books and papers together for school.	
	7:00 AM	5. Leave for school.	
	7:00 PM	6. Complete homework.	
	8:00 PM	7. Decide how to spend or save my paycheck.	
	8:30 PM	8. Try to find a different job.	
School	7:45 AM	1. Meet with Mr. Jones to ask if I can retake the test.	
	9:00 AM	2. Take notes in history class.	
	11:30 AM	3. Talk to Jack at lunch about the argument we had yesterday.	
	1:00 PM	4. Complete science project with my group.	
Work	2:45 PM	1. Catch a bus to work.	
	3:00 PM	2. Check supplies inventory before my shift starts.	
	5:30 PM	3. Speak to my boss about the raise that was promised.	

SETTING EXPECTATIONS



AGENDA

- Starter
- What You Put In Is What You Get Out
- Building Cooperation
- Overcoming Obstacles Bill of Rights
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will recognize that their active participation is critical to their getting the most from the Overcoming Obstacles course.

Students will identify the challenges and benefits of working with other students in a group.

Students will recognize the need to cooperate with and respect other class members as they master life skills together.

Students will identify a set of rights that promote cooperation and respect in the Overcoming Obstacles classroom.

Materials Needed

- 15 sheets of newspaper for each group (Part II)
- About three feet of masking tape for each group (Part II)
- Chart paper and a marker (Part III)

Starter (2 minutes)

Ask students if they have ever seen a preview for a movie that seemed interesting. Ask whether they went to see the movie when it opened. If so, find out if the movie was better than they thought it would be. Was it worse? Did it meet their expectations?

Tell students that this lesson is about setting expectations and that they will discuss as a class what to expect from the lessons, from the teacher, and from one another.

Part I What You Put In Is What You Get Out (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify what they expect from the Overcoming Obstacles course and why their active participation is required to meet those expectations.

1. Students identify their expectations for this class.

Remind students that the previous lesson provided an overview of what they'll be learning in the Overcoming Obstacles course. Ask students to write down their expectations. Offer examples such as the following:

- I'll learn to make better decisions.
- I'll learn how to use my time more efficiently.

2. Students discuss how they will acquire life skills.

Remind students of the discussion in the previous lesson about the best way to learn a song for a concert. Ask students to recall their conclusions about the best way to develop new skills. (Students should mention that it's best to learn by doing and practicing.)

Ask students to review their expectations and to consider how well they'll meet those expectations if they don't practice the skills. Ask students how well they will succeed if they only sit in their seats and listen to you talk and watch others develop these life skills. Encourage discussion.

Conclude by emphasizing that Overcoming Obstacles is a course about life. Explain that you will help every student relate the skills and activities to their own life, but it's ultimately up to each student to practice the skills in order to master them.

Part II Building Cooperation (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students demonstrate the benefits of group work and the importance of cooperation to group success.

1. Students identify the importance of learning how to work with others.

Ask, “Why is it important for you to be able to work as part of a group?” Point out to students that as young people now and later as adults, they will often be required to work in groups or teams. Explain to students that group activities will be a frequently occurring format in the Overcoming Obstacles course and that the course will teach them skills that will enable them to function well as part of a team. Tell students that you expect them to work cooperatively.

2. Students participate in a cooperative group activity.

Divide the class into groups of four or five students. Have students arrange their desks to create an open work space for each group. Distribute 15 sheets of newspaper and three feet of masking tape to each group.

Give the groups the following directions:

- Please don’t start until I tell you to do so.
- Using only the materials I gave out, you will have 10 minutes to build the highest freestanding tower you can.
- The tower cannot be taped to the desks or to the floor. It must stand on its own.

Answer any questions students may have, then instruct them to begin. Circulate through the room, observing group interactions and noting conversations and comments. Watch for evidence of both cooperation and dissension.

3. Students reflect on the experience.

When 10 minutes have passed, check students’ results and involve all groups in a discussion of the experience. Ask the groups to describe how they built their tower and why they think they were or weren’t successful. Share your observations and encourage students to elaborate on what took place. Ask for examples of how all team members contributed. Allow students to discuss, in respectful terms, any tensions that developed.

Give each group two to three minutes to summarize what they learned from the experience. Offer questions such as the following for guidance:

- What is easy about working with others?
- What is difficult?
- Why is cooperation necessary?
- What will your group do differently the next time you work together?

Ask the groups to share their summaries. Have them describe what it is like to work as a team and how to improve cooperation in the future. Write their responses on the board.

Part III Overcoming Obstacles Bill of Rights (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students work together to establish guidelines and expectations for the class.

1. Students recall their expectations for the class.

Point out that so far, students have stated their expectations for the course, and you have stated your expectation of how students will work together cooperatively in groups. Explain that students also have a right to expect certain treatment and behavior from fellow students in this class.

2. Students discuss the purpose of rules.

Ask students to name some school rules and to suggest reasons why these rules are in place. Affirm that rules are designed not just to stop negative behavior, but to protect the rights of those who behave appropriately.

3. Students create a classroom bill of rights.

Have students identify the document that guarantees individual rights in the United States. (Students should mention the Bill of Rights, the first 10 amendments to the Constitution.)

Have students read the Bill of Rights (available at www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights-transcript). Have students review the document and describe its characteristics. Write student responses on the board. Guide students to focus on the document's language, format, and structure, as well as its content. (Students might respond: the date and place are written at the top of the document, the first sentence tells why Americans need the document, the language is formal.)

Divide students into pairs. Have them create a bill of rights for this class that's patterned after this important document. Remind them that their bill of rights should protect the right of every class member to be treated with respect, to voice different opinions, to expect confidentiality when sharing personal experiences, and to be considered a valued member of the group. Guide them in coming to an agreement on 10 basic rights. Write them on chart paper.

When the list is complete, have students come forward to sign the document. Post the bill of rights on a bulletin board for the duration of the course. Remind students that this document will be referred to frequently in this class. It provides a statement of mutual understandings about respectful behavior that will be expected from all members of the class.

Conclusion (3 minutes)

Ask students to explain the relationship between participating in class and learning. Elicit from students the following key points that were taught in this lesson:

- Each student is responsible for giving the most to and getting the most from the content taught in this course.
- Students will work together in groups in this course, so they must know how to cooperate with others.
- The bill of rights will remind students of how they expect to be treated and how others expect to be treated by them.

Student Assessment

1. List three advantages and three disadvantages of working with others in a group.
2. List five examples of times when people must work together in a group or as a team.
3. What skills are necessary for people to work well together?

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“History has demonstrated that the most notable winners usually encountered heartbreaking obstacles before they triumphed. They won because they refused to become discouraged by their defeats.” —B. C. Forbes

Ask students to research a person who has overcome obstacles. Have students write at least three paragraphs on the obstacles the person overcame and prepare a two-minute presentation.

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Have students create the following lists:

1. Their expectations for school.
2. Their responsibilities.
3. Experiences they would like to have (e.g., skydiving).
4. The skills they hope to learn.
5. What they hope to learn about themselves and others.

Ask students to share one item from each list.

Writing in Your Journal

Ask students to write a letter to themselves. Have them include their expectations for school, events or experiences they are looking forward to, special memories, and first impressions of the year.

Discuss writing letters to yourself as a technique for staying focused on your dreams and keeping yourself “in check.”

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Divide students into small groups. Have each group perform two role plays, one showing a classroom that does not follow the bill of rights the class made and another showing a class that does.

Discuss the importance of following the classroom bill of rights.

Homework

Have students keep a list of the obstacles and challenges they face over the next three days. At the end of the three days, have them note next to each obstacle which skills from the “Table of Contents” activity sheet can help them overcome that obstacle.

Have volunteers share the skills they most look forward to learning through this course.

Additional Resources

Have students review *The Secret of Success Is Not a Secret: Stories of Famous People Who Persevered* by Darcy Andries or *Top Performance: How to Develop Excellence in Yourself and Others* by Zig Ziglar.

Ask students to choose and discuss five key ideas from one of the books.