

DEVELOPING PERSONAL POWER



AGENDA

- Starter
- The Power Within
- Who's the Boss?
- Power for Positive Change
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will develop an understanding of power.

Students will identify the forms that power can take.

Students will identify the power of personal responsibility.

Starter (3 minutes)

Clear a space in the classroom big enough for students to walk around in. Tell students to stand in that space. Ask them to select (in their minds) two other students and to keep these students' identities a secret. Explain that each student's goal is to walk around the room until they are equidistant from the two chosen students. Give students three minutes to achieve their goal. They will notice that each time one student moves, it affects the movement of everyone else in the room.

Elicit from students that this is an example of how they have the power to effect change in their environment. Physical and mental power worked together to effect the change.

Tell students that they probably have much more personal power than they think.

Part I The Power Within (13 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify power in its many forms, including the decisions they make.

1. Students explore different forms of power.

Remind students that the exercise they've just completed shows that strength and intelligence can become sources of personal power. By asking questions such as the following, prompt students to think about other things that give people power:

- Does health give people power?
- Does wealth give people power?
- Does beauty give people power?
- Does physical size give people power?
- Does knowledge give people power?
- Does popularity give people power?
- Does the ability to communicate give people power?

Encourage students to explain their answers.

Write student responses where everyone can see. Afterward, take a quick poll of the class, item by item, to see how many agree that the things they listed really give people power. Ask students to provide examples of newsmakers or people from the past who used these forms of power. Have them identify what these people have accomplished through their own personal power.

2. Students consider the true sources of power.

Have students name someone or something that has more power than they do. Ask students to explain the source of this power.

Explore examples given to help guide students to the source of true power. For example, if a student says a judge or the courts have power because they can suspend a person's driver's license, make the following points in sequence:

- Explain that even though the court has the power to suspend a person's driver's license, it does not have to do so.
- Before the court suspends a license, it gathers information on the offense and makes a decision about it.
- Prior to the court's decision to suspend a license, the driver made a decision to violate the law.
- What decision might the driver have made? (Among other things, students might answer: speeding or drinking and driving.)

Lead students to conclude that the ability to make choices is a kind of power. As students agree, add "the ability to make a choice" to the list on the board and circle it. Tell students that they will spend more time later in this course learning about how to make better decisions.

Part II Who's the Boss? (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students explore the use of personal power to influence their own lives.

1. Students rate their effectiveness on a scale of one to 10.

Tell students to write down a number from one to 10 that rates the amount of power they feel they have to do the following (10 is the largest amount of power, one is the smallest amount of power):

- Wear what they want
- Get good grades in school
- Get a part-time job
- Go out with the girl or boy that they like

Once students have added up their numbers, tell students that a score above 20 means that they have a fair amount of personal power and they know it! A score below 20 means that they probably have more personal power than they think. Explain that they will look at how they use their decision making power to influence their lives.

2. Students apply decision making power to aspects of their daily lives.

Review each of the above questions with students to see how they rated themselves. Ask students who rated themselves five or above on their power to get good grades to pair with students who rated themselves less than five. Ask students who rated themselves five or above to describe ways in which the choices they make help influence their grades. Then, ask students who rated themselves less than five to brainstorm ways in which they can get better grades in school. Repeat this procedure for the third and fourth items on the list.

Part III Power for Positive Change (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students recognize the power of personal responsibility.

1. Students apply their personal power to effect positive change.

Remind students that we alone are responsible for how we use our personal power. Throughout history, people have used and abused different forms of power. Ask students for examples of uses and abuses of power in today's news. For abuses, have volunteers offer one or two options for positive change.

Point out that our personal power can be used to effect change, not only in our own lives, but in the lives of those in our families, our schools, and our communities.

Divide the class into groups of three or four and ask each group to choose something they'd like to change about their school. Have them decide upon a plan to use their personal power to effect change. Point out that this power may take different forms within the group. Ask students to try to identify the forms of power (such as intelligence, wit, and decision making) they will use to effect a positive change in their school community.

2. Students present their plans.

Ask each group to present its plan. Have the whole class reach consensus on whether to present one or more of the plans to the school principal. Discuss with students the criteria they used to determine the importance of the issue and the readiness of the plan. Point out the variety of ways in which students can choose to use the power they have.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Remind students that their goal should be to use their personal power to positively influence their lives. Ask students to identify situations in their own lives in which they can begin to make their personal power work for them. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Personal power lies in the choices we make.
- Your choices will affect your own life and often the lives of others.
- You alone are responsible for how you use your power.

Student Assessment

1. List three things that can give people power.
2. Name someone who has a lot of power. What kind of power does this person have? How did this person get this power?
3. List three things in your life that you have the power to control.

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“Actually, I have no regard for money. Aside from its purchasing power, it’s completely useless as far as I’m concerned.” —Alfred Hitchcock

Have students interpret this quote. Discuss students’ views on money as a source of power.

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Have small groups of students create posters or electronic collages that represent personal power.

Allow each group to show their poster and explain how it represents personal power.

Writing in Your Journal

Have students write about the personal power they possess and how they will use this power in a positive way.

Discuss with students the forms and uses of personal power.

Using Technology

Have each student choose a person they think has or had power. Tell each to research that person using the internet or traditional resources.

Have students report their findings to the class. Have them identify the type of power the person they chose had/has and how the person used it.

Homework

Have students print out or clip a newspaper article in which ordinary people use personal power to effect change among their families, friends, schools, or communities.

Discuss everyday and “newsworthy” instances of personal power.

Additional Resources

Have students review biographies of leaders. (You may want to choose a particular group of leaders, such as women, African Americans, politicians, etc.)

Discuss the reasons why each person studied had/has power. Discuss how each person used their power. Write responses on the board or on an interactive projection device.