

ADAPTING TO CHANGE

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Objectives

Students will recognize both positive and negative reactions to change.
Students will learn that they have the power to accept and adapt to change.
Students will visualize potential changes in themselves and their lives.

Materials Needed

- Items to change your appearance for this class (e.g., glasses, hat) (Starter)
- Two sheets of drawing paper for each student (Part III)
- Colored markers and crayons (Part III)

Starter (3 minutes)

Change your appearance for class today. (For example, if you do not wear glasses, wear a pair. Comb your hair differently or wear a hat. If you usually wear plain-colored clothing, wear a shirt with a brightly colored pattern.) Choose a change that will be noticeable to your students.

As students enter the classroom, greet them as usual. When everyone is seated, ask if anyone notices a change in your appearance. Invite students to respond to your new look.

Explain that life is full of changes. Sometimes, we create the changes ourselves, and sometimes we respond to them. Tell students that in today's lesson you'll be discussing different types of changes and how people respond to them.

Part I Different Now (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students recognize both positive and negative reactions to change.

1. STUDENTS IDENTIFY AND EVALUATE REACTIONS TO CHANGE.

Ask students to think about their reactions to your new look. Then, begin a discussion about changes in appearances by asking the following questions:

- How do people sometimes react to a change in another person's appearance? (*Students might respond: ignore it, like it, dislike it, compliment the person, laugh at the person.*)
- How do you think the person who has made the change feels? (*Students might respond: self-conscious, anxious, uncertain, excited, proud, happy, sad.*)

Write student responses on the board. Then, challenge students to review the responses listed and mark those they consider to be positive with a + sign, and those they consider to be negative with a – sign.

Point out that students have identified both positive and negative reactions to change. Tell students that changes affect people in different ways. Explain that sometimes we feel ambivalent about change, while other times we struggle to adjust to changes in ourselves and in others.

Continue the discussion by asking how tolerance and respect affect reactions to changes in people. Remind students that they have control over how they respond to people. Then, have them identify responses that do not show tolerance or respect for others.

2. STUDENTS MAKE A CHANGE IN THEIR CLASSROOM.

Explain that students are now going to think about a different kind of change. Announce that you have decided to adjust the seating in the classroom for the rest of the session.

Ask students to seat themselves in a specific manner (e.g., alphabetically if students are seated randomly, in size order, or by eye color).

Give students time to change seats and settle themselves. Then, say, “I noticed some very different reactions from people in this room.”

3. STUDENTS REACT TO THE CHANGE.

Invite students to tell how they feel about the new seating arrangement. Encourage them to consider both positive and negative reactions. Write student responses in a second list on the board, asking whether you should place a + or a – sign after each one. If students are uncertain about how to categorize a response, write an “A” after it for “ambivalent.”

Ask students to compare this list with the other list on the board. Ask if they notice any similarities. (*Students should respond: both lists include positive and negative reactions; reactions to this change are very similar to the reactions to changes in the other list.*)

Part II Change and Stress (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students learn that they have the power to accept and adapt to change.

1. STUDENTS IDENTIFY CHANGES THAT TAKE PLACE OVER TIME.

Point out that changes in life are not always visible and don’t always happen suddenly. To prompt students to think about such changes, say, for example, “When I was your age, I was six inches shorter and wanted to become a pilot.”

Through discussion, guide students to identify changes that are invisible or that happen over a period of time. Use questions and comments if necessary to prompt students to identify such changes as likes and dislikes, opinions, feelings, thinking, learning, goals, age, physical build, friends, and family structures. Encourage students to give examples of the changes they mention.

2. STUDENTS RECOGNIZE THAT CHANGE CAN BE STRESSFUL.

Point out that all changes—ones that we can see, ones that we make ourselves, ones that we can’t see, and ones that happen over time—can be difficult to handle at times. Then, ask students if they think that change can be stressful. Encourage them to explain why.

As students respond, guide them to review what they learned about stress:

- Stress is tension, or feelings of pressure or anxiety.
- Stress can happen when people, events, or situations make us feel powerless and out of control. Some changes can make us feel this way.
- Change does not cause stress—our feelings cause stress.

Emphasize that some changes can cause us to feel stress, and that this stress can sometimes lead to conflict. Then, remind students that they have the power to handle stress, control their feelings and behaviors, and even avoid conflicts. Explain that this power enables them to accept changes in their lives and adapt to them.

3. STUDENTS RECALL THE POWER OF POSITIVE ATTITUDES.

Point out to students that change is a natural part of life and that they cope very well with many changes every day. Ask volunteers to describe how they cope with change. Invite other students to add comments or give suggestions of their own. If it doesn't come up in discussion, ask students how a positive attitude can affect how they accept and adapt to change.

Summarize your discussion by saying, "Change can be negative if you respond to it negatively. But if you respond positively by understanding your feelings and keeping them in control, positive things will result from change. Remember what we learned about the power of a positive attitude, because it comes into play here."

Part III Changing the View (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students visualize potential changes in themselves and their lives.

1. STUDENTS WORK ON AN ART PROJECT TO VISUALIZE CHANGES IN THEIR LIVES.

Set out sheets of drawing paper and a supply of colored markers and crayons. Explain that students are going to draw "Now" and "Later" pictures.

Give students the following instructions:

- Begin by drawing a large pair of eyeglass frames on each sheet of paper. Draw a frame that reflects what you would like to wear now. Then, draw another pair that you might like to wear later.
- You will picture your world today in one pair and your world four years from now in the other pair.
- In the lenses of your "Now" glasses, draw a picture of yourself, a picture of your school, a favorite thing, and a goal you have for this year—things that reflect you now.
- In the lenses of your "Later" glasses, draw how these things might change in four years.
- You may include symbols or words in your pictures if you wish.

2. STUDENTS COMPARE PICTURES.

Give students most of the remaining class time to work. To close this activity, have students look at the differences in the pictures they drew. Ask for a show

of hands from students who drew changes in themselves. Observe that it seems as though all of them expect to continue to grow and change over the next four years.

Call on volunteers to describe the schools they drew in their “Later” pictures. Have them identify the schools and tell how they expect them to be different from the school they are currently attending.

If time permits and students seem willing, invite them to share their pictures and identify some of the changes they drew. Focus the discussion on the changes their pictures represent by asking, for example, “What changes did you need to make in order to get that diploma (or that car, or that job)?”

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students if they think that successful people are able to accept and adapt to changes in their lives. Encourage volunteers to explain their answers. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Change is a natural part of everyone’s life.
- Changes in life can be stressful, but you have the power to adapt to them.
- Keeping a positive attitude will help you accept and adapt to changes in your life.

Questions for Assessment

1. List three changes you have made in the past year.
2. Describe a positive and a negative response to change.
3. List a positive change that you want to make in yourself, your school, and your community.

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Extension: Using Quotations

Quote: “Our dilemma is that we hate change and love it at the same time; what we really want is for things to remain the same but get better.”
–Sydney Harris

Activity: Have students make lists of things in their lives they want to change and lists of things they don’t want to change. Discuss how to make change happen and how to cope with change.

Extension: Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Activity: Ask students to draw outlines of their hands and list five ways to handle stress. Have them place one of these methods on each finger in their drawings. Provide markers and crayons so students can decorate their outlines.

Ask students to share their outlines with the class. Display their outlines around the classroom.

Extension: Writing in Your Journal

Activity: Have students imagine that their best friends have changed and no longer like the activities or music they do. It seems as though they and their friends have different values. Have students write about how they would feel in this situation.

Have students discuss how they would react to such a change and if they would find it stressful.

Extension: Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Activity: Give each student a short comic strip. Have students describe what is happening in the comic strip. Then, have students change, add, or delete one thing about the comic strip.

Have students trade comic strips and write about how adding or deleting something impacted the outcome.

Extension: Homework

Activity: Have students interview someone outside of class about the most significant change (either positive or negative) the person has ever had to handle.

Have students discuss those changes (not whom they interviewed) and how they would have dealt with the same situations.

Extension: Additional Resources

Activity: Have students read *Who Moved My Cheese? for Teens* by Spencer Johnson.

When they have finished reading, discuss the book’s allegory and the idea that change is the only certainty in life. Ask students to brainstorm ways to anticipate, accept, and adapt to change.