

# 1 The 'Yes, but...' game

Pupils play short games to explore having a positive attitude when dealing with a challenge.

**Intention:** Pupils explore the stories we tell ourselves about potential challenges and recognise that we don't have to believe those stories.



**SEL competency: Self-management** Think positively about challenges

**Materials:** A board to write on. Use **Posters 1 and 2** for visual support and emotions vocabulary

**Duration:** 10 minutes

**Key words:** *challenge, tension*

## Instructions:

### Prepare

- 1 You may want to pre-teach the key words for this activity.
- 2 Introduce the activity: *We're going to explore how being positive can help us with challenges. I'm going to ask you to use your imagination for this activity.*

### Practise

- 3 Now invite pupils to begin the opening routine: *Please sit up, with your back straight. Put your feet flat on the floor. Hands on your lap.* (See 'How to use' Card and Methodology Handbook for support on the opening and closing routine.)
- 4 Begin: *Close your eyes or look down. Remember you're in your own bubble.*
- 5 Continue: *I'd like you to imagine that you have got a surprise test next week. Notice how you feel and what thoughts you are having.* Use **Poster 1** for emotions vocabulary. Allow pupils to sit for 20 seconds, imagining the scenario: *How does your body feel? Is there any tension?*
- 6 If their eyes are closed, ask pupils to open them: *When I count to three, open your eyes. One, two, three.*

- 7** Invite pupils to reflect back to the group how they felt (I felt sick, I felt hot, etc.) and what their thoughts were: *What thoughts did you have?* (I will fail the test, I can't spell very well, I don't want to study for it, etc.). You can refer here to **Poster 2**.
- 8** Continue: *Let's make a list of the negative thoughts. This is the story you are telling yourselves about the test.*
- 9** Write *'I can't spell very well'* on the board: *How can we think about this in a positive way, starting with the words 'Yes, but...'?*
- 10** In groups of three or four, let pupils brainstorm some ideas. One suggestion could be: 'Yes, but with practice I'll get better.' Invite pupils to notice how the 'yes, but' thought makes them feel.
- 11** Once you have gone through the list of negative thoughts about the test, you might also try these:  
*'It's raining and I want to play outside.'*  
*'I'm bored.'*  
*'I don't like getting up in the morning.'*  
*'I'm never going to learn to play the (piano/guitar) well.'*  
Invite pupils to suggest their own sentences.

## Reflect

- 12** Say: *How we think about something can have an impact on how we feel about the challenge – and sometimes how things end. The story we tell ourselves makes a difference. So, how can we think positively about a challenge? Maybe we can rewrite the story.*
- 13** Bring the activity to a close: *Maybe the next time you are worried about a challenge, you can notice the story you are telling yourself and then say 'Yes, but...' and see if you can add a positive ending. What do you think?*

**We can often find something positive in every situation.**