

Positive Reframing

Reframing from negative to positive for an optimistic attitude towards meaningful change

ACTING | Optimism

→ What you will need:

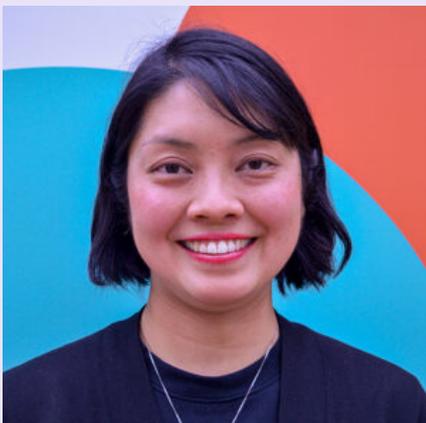
-  2-10
-  Workshop
-  10 mins preparation
-  1.5 hrs
-  Whiteboard or flip-chart

→ Related Tools:

-  [Creating New Metaphors](#)

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“Teach students to switch to reframe their thoughts into positive feelings. Optimism is something they can learn and gain! They’ll soon realise how nice it is to think in an optimistic way about the future.”

—Mashiho Mihalache





I. Overview

Optimism helps find the common ground for collaboration, uniting divergent groups with the hope that our collective efforts will achieve beneficial environmental outcomes. We advocate for greater use of optimism in the communication of environmental science to rebalance our negative communication culture, a transition that may well inspire greater public engagement with environmental solutions. Although we often need a dose of reality to shock us into awareness of a problem, it cannot be denied that success stories can inspire people and bridge the gap between problem and solution (McAfee et al., 2019).

Our mental attitude affects how we interpret events, and we may have varying levels of optimism. While we may have a habit of interpreting events pessimistically, it is possible to unlearn this and develop a more optimistic mindset. This tool will teach students how to reframe their interpretation of transition-related topics into a positive mindset.

Learning outcome

- ✓ The student is able to sustain and communicate a sense of hope, a positive attitude and confidence in the possibility of meaningful change





II. Learning Activity

In analysing any transition-related topic, the student examines the driving and restraining forces. Through reframing the restraining forces in optimistic attitudes and sharing these, the student learns to sustain and communicate optimism.



1. Introduction to the Theme 20 mins

Choose a theme for societal transitions. This can be any theme. In this description, we use the circular economy as an example.

Instruct students to identify the driving and restraining forces of a circular economy based on their personal experiences. They should write these forces on a whiteboard or flip-chart.



2. Sharing Thoughts 20 mins

Students either share their thoughts in pairs or present them to the entire class (if the group size is fewer than ten people).



3. Reframing 20 mins

Introduce the concept of reframing and its connection to a positive attitude and hope. Instruct students to reframe the restraining forces they identified in Step 1 positively and write their responses on a whiteboard or flip chart. Encourage them to be creative and innovative.

For example, a restraining force of products becoming too expensive because of a circular economy can be reframed as making consumers thoughtful in making purchasing decisions.





4. Sharing Optimism 15 mins

Ask the students to share their positive reframes in the same pairs or groups as in Step 2. Students share their optimistic reframing and reflect on how this change in framing makes them feel.

Tip: as an additional optional exercise, students can ask their peers to challenge the optimistic attitude by questioning the reframed sentences in order to exercise how to sustain and/or communicate hope and optimism.



5. Reflection and Assessment 15 mins

Invite students for a group reflection in which they share their personal reflections and the positive reframes they came up with. Encourage students to listen actively and respond positively to each other's reframing.

Instruct students to reflect on whether this exercise has helped them to develop a more positive attitude and sense of hope regarding the potential for meaningful change. Encourage them to explain why or why not.

Please note: as part of assessment *as learning*, students reflect using the reflective questions.





III. Assessment

Assessment is based on an exchange of experience in a group of two students.



Purpose

Assessment *as learning* aims to strengthen the learning process and the development of metacognitive skills. It empowers students to direct their own learning and to become independent, critical self-assessors.



Roles

Self-assessment



Characteristics

Self-regulated learning with peer feedback



Materials

Reflective questions



Assessment

Reflective questions

1. In what way did this exercise enable you to communicate a sense of hope and a positive attitude towards meaningful change?
2. How can you contribute to a sense of hope and a positive attitude towards meaningful change in the societal transition of your choice?
3. How can you further improve your optimistic thinking?
4. In what other situations can you see yourself being able to use this kind of reframing of mind?





IV. References

McAfee, D., Doubleday, Z. A., Geiger, N., & Connell, S. D. (2019). Everyone loves a success story: optimism inspires conservation engagement. *BioScience*, 69(4), 274–281.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biz019>

Pienkowski, T., Keane, A., de Lange, E., Khanyari, M., Arlidge, W. N., Baranyi, G., ... & Milner-Gulland, E. J. (2022). Personal traits predict conservationists' optimism about outcomes for nature. *Conservation Letters*, 15(2), e12873.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/conl.12873>

