



EduTrend Contents

G4C · GRATITUDE AND POSITIVE THINKING GAMES · MIDDLE SCHOOL

Helpful Thought Detectives

Sort thoughts in invented setbacks into unhelpful, helpful and forced-positive, and write realistic helpful thoughts

Ages 12–14

Level: Intermediate

45 minutes

Pairs · up to 30

Activity 04

Inside: activity at a glance · step-by-step session plan · facilitator notes · 3 student worksheets · assessment checklist

ACTIVITY 04 · AT A GLANCE

Helpful Thought Detectives

Pairs read invented setbacks, such as a character not being picked for a team, with a set of possible thoughts. They sort each thought into unhelpful (“I’m useless”), helpful (“I can ask what to practise”) or forced-positive (“It doesn’t matter at all”). They discuss why forced positivity can backfire, then write realistic helpful thoughts and one small next step for each character.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session students can:

- recognise unhelpful thinking patterns;
- distinguish helpful from forced-positive thoughts;
- write realistic helpful thoughts;
- plan small next steps.

KEY WORDS

thought · helpful · unhelpful · realistic · forced positivity · next step

CURRICULUM LINKS

PSHE: resilience. English: discussion and writing. Psychology: thinking patterns.

1

SETTLE

Calm start

2

EXPLAIN

One game, clear rules

3

PLAY

Invented characters

4

NOTICE

Clues and feelings

5

TALK

Different views are fine

6

CLOSE

Calm and positive

Materials (per pair)

- Invented setback cards
- Thought sort cards
- Worksheets 1, 2 and 3

Before the session

- Write setbacks and thought cards.
- Model one sort.
- Plan pairs.
- Prepare discussion prompts.

SAFETY

Setbacks are invented. Signpost support for anyone who finds the topic difficult.

ACTIVITY 04 · SESSION PLAN

Step by step

The aim is realistic, kind thinking, not pretending everything is fine.

Time	What happens	Say or ask
0–8 min Settle	Three kinds of thought.	<i>“Which sounds believable?”</i>
8–25 min Sort	Pairs sort thought cards.	<i>“Why is that forced?”</i>
25–38 min Write	Realistic thoughts and steps.	<i>“Is it kind and believable?”</i>
38–45 min Close	Share examples.	<i>“Which thought would you use?”</i>

CHALLENGE CARD (print or copy onto the board)

Rewrite unhelpful thoughts into ones that are kind, realistic and lead to a next step.

ACTIVITY 04 · FACILITATOR NOTES

The gratitude game know-how in brief

Helpful thinking accepts that a setback is disappointing and then looks for a useful next step.

Forced positivity, insisting everything is fine, can make people feel unheard; realistic thoughts are usually more believable.

Common ideas to listen for

- “Positive thinking means never feeling bad.” Feelings are valid.
- “All negative thoughts are wrong.” Some are accurate.
- “A helpful thought fixes everything.” It helps you take a step.

Adapting the activity

Support

Provide pre-sorted examples to check.

Stretch

Write a short dialogue where a friend helps someone find a realistic thought.

WORKSHEET 1

Thought sort

Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

For each setback.

Thought sort

Thought	Unhelpful	Helpful	Forced

WORKSHEET 2

Rewrite

Realistic thoughts.

Rewrite

Setback	Realistic thought	Next step

WORKSHEET 3

Why realistic?

Reflect.

Realistic helpful thoughts work better than forced positivity because...

FOR THE TEACHER

Assessment checklist

Use during the session. One sheet covers up to eight students; copy as needed.

Student	Sorts thoughts accurately	Writes realistic thoughts	Plans next steps

Suggested codes: W = working towards · E = expected · G = greater depth

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Helpful Thought Detectives is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents G4C Gratitude and Positive Thinking Games programme (middle school, level: intermediate). Every activity in the programme follows the same format: a practical challenge, a clear session plan, facilitator notes and ready-to-print worksheets, so that teachers, club leaders and parents can run it without extra preparation.

Full 15-, 20- and 32-week programmes are available from EduStore at edutrend.org.

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