

# Positive thinking

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

- To be more self-aware
- To acknowledge personal skills and abilities
- To know that support is available



## RESOURCES

- Copies of Resources 1 and 3
- Likes and dislikes cards prepared from Resources 2A and 2B
- Camera (Activity 4, optional)

## RELATED TOPICS

- What are you like? (Theme 5, Topic 1)
- What gets you up in the morning? (Theme 5, Topic 3)
- Getting involved with things (Theme 5, Topic 4)
- Managing your time (Theme 5, Topic 5)

## HEALTH SKILLS

People with low self-esteem find it hard to be positive and to appreciate their own strengths and abilities. Self-knowledge helps us choose things that suit us, build on skills or learn new skills, adapt to new situations and give a positive impression of ourselves. The emphasis must be on the need to be positive in order to keep moving forward and build self-confidence. This topic is designed to encourage learners to talk about themselves in a positive way.

Note: this is a very sensitive subject and tutors need to be cautious. It is difficult, for example, for people with clinical depression to be positive.

### Five Ways to Wellbeing

#### Take Notice

This topic asks people to reflect on what they are good at and building confidence. MIND says: 'Reminding yourself to "take notice" can strengthen and broaden awareness. Heightened awareness also enhances your self-understanding and allows you to make positive choices based on your own values and motivations.'

#### Keep Learning

Talking about learning new skills, encourage people to think of ways of learning.

MIND says: "Continued learning through life enhances self-esteem and encourages social interaction and a more active life. The practice of setting goals, which is related to adult learning in particular, has been strongly associated with higher levels of wellbeing." Use the Five Ways to Wellbeing in Activity 4 as a prompt for things that they could add.

## FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

The ability to verbalise your thoughts helps enormously in the process of positive thinking. Identifying your own strengths and weaknesses and discussing with others possible ways to capitalise on or address them is powerful. In order to practise positive thinking, learners need to:

- discuss personal tastes, abilities and skills with others.

### Functional Skills/Core Curriculum

Activities in this topic will contribute to learning in the following curriculum areas:

- discuss with others **English E3.3** (L)SLc/E3.3)
- list personal achievements **English L1.23** (L)Wt/L1.2).

## Engage

- Ask learners to think of something they are good at. Give them time to think carefully or ask other people's opinions. Give examples to help guide under-confident learners. It can be anything from listening to playing a sport or even being modest.
- Extend the idea of being good at something into thinking about why they feel they are good at it: 'What makes you good at it? Is it to do with the way you were taught or brought up?', 'Is it just something you feel you've inherited?'
- Introduce the topic by explaining to learners that they are going to think about and record their achievements and that it is a useful exercise for situations such as interviews or meeting new people. Point out that identifying and discussing with others about personal strengths (and weaknesses) can help a person to be more confident and to put across a positive image of themselves.
- Note: not all learners will feel comfortable with a self-analysis of their skills. In such cases a better way of introducing the concept of personal skills may be by providing short case studies or anecdotes, e.g. from applicants and employers, which highlight the importance of being able to identify and sell one's skills and show how this can help with job interviews or promotion at work.

*What are you good at?*

*When do you need to be able to talk about what you are good at?*

## Enable

### ACTIVITY 1

#### Acknowledge different types of personal skills

- Ask learners what they consider to be a skill. (Skills are things you are good at – they can be done almost without thinking about them.) Record some of the ideas.
- Discuss how skills are acquired, referring to the list of ideas (through life experience, education, workplace, interests, each other).
- Give out Resource 1 and ask for volunteers to take turns to read a speech-bubble and accompanying explanatory box.
- Set up pairs, to focus on and use the information in the 'Skills and achievements' box. Ask learners to pick out the four skills or achievements this person mentions. Give feedback to the whole group.
- Explain that sometimes we forget we have skills or don't make enough of them – sometimes we don't consider something we do to be a skill – until we notice that other people are not able to do something which we take for granted.
- Suggest learners work in pairs again to think of four skills or achievements they have each/between them. Encourage them to help each other identify these skills.
- Ask each person to report one piece of information they have found out about the other person. (If there are shy/reliant learners in the group, then just ask for volunteers to say what they have discovered about the skills they have.)

*Think about the word 'skill'. What does it mean for you?*

*How can you learn skills?*

*What skills do you think you have?*

*How easy was it to identify your skills and achievements?*

### Support

- Go through the information systematically sentence by sentence.
- Prompt learners who need help as they work in pairs.

### ESOL

- Make sure learners understand expressions in the speech-bubbles, such as 'pass exams/driving test', 'encourage somebody to do something'. Use the first speech-bubble to focus on the use of tenses. Ask learners to highlight in different colours:
  - verbs that tell them what happened in the past ('passed', 'used to play')
  - verbs that tell them what he is doing now ('I'm teaching myself').
- Ask learners to make similar sentences about their skills and achievements.

## ACTIVITY 2

### Encourage talking about/sharing personal experiences

- Go back to Resource 1 and read the information about influences. Use this as the starting point for a small-group discussion on things that influence learners. This can be anything from documentaries on TV to people they know. (Most people can remember a teacher who encouraged or disillusioned them!)
- Learners could tell the rest of the group one or two interesting things about each other.

*Who or what do you think has had a big influence on your life?*

### Support

- Help learners to think by explaining about things in your own life which have influenced you (peer-group pressure, family, particular teacher/friend, etc.).
- Start learners off by asking questions that help them to bring out their own experiences. Encourage them to concentrate on any positive influences when it comes to people.

### ESOL

Encourage learners to talk about their own experiences both before and since moving to the UK.

## ACTIVITY 3

### Consider and share personal preferences

- Go back once more to Resource 1 and read the information and examples from the 'Likes and dislikes' section.
- Give learners the likes and dislikes cards prepared from Resources 2A and 2B and ask them to sort them into piles under 'like' and 'dislike'. They may also wish to make a 'not sure' pile. Although the cards are in sets of opposites, it is possible to have contrasting cards in the same pile.
- In pairs, learners can discuss and compare their likes and dislikes. Learners can add their own ideas to the two blank cards.
- Note: if you think the group would enjoy the interaction, suggest that each learner chooses two 'likes' cards and moves around the room finding other people who share the same likes – stopping and talking for a minute and then moving on. If there is time, this could be repeated with two 'dislikes' cards.

*What types of things do you like?*

*What things do you dislike?*

## Support

Read through the cards one by one with learners and ask direct questions about them, putting them into a personal context where possible, for example: 'Do you like being always on the go at home or would you rather sit and watch television?'

## ESOL

- Check learners are able to use words for expressing likes and dislikes correctly.
- Write up some examples, e.g. 'I don't like working on my own', 'I enjoy working with other people', 'I love meeting new people', 'I dislike staying indoors all the time', 'I hate being with a lot of people'.
- Point out the use of the '-ing' form of the verb after 'like', etc. Ask learners to suggest other examples about themselves.

## ACTIVITY 4

### Talk about personal achievements and compile a record

- Help learners to bring together all the information they have found out about themselves and to think about what it is telling them, for example: 'I have skills and achievements, but I need to ask for more support to help me make the most of them and to improve my confidence.'
- If possible, use Resource 3 (the 'personal achievements' record) to conduct mini informal interviews with learners in order to bring out and record their skills and abilities. They can write these in themselves or you can write them in.
- Encourage those who feel able to start filling in their record, but give each person the opportunity at some stage to talk about it.
- Offer everyone the opportunity to ask for more support or advice.
- Note: learners can keep this sheet as a personal reminder. If learners are likely to be job-hunting in the future, they might use this information to do job searches or for job applications/interviews.
- This personal achievements record can be added to as the weeks go by. Learners might like to take photos of each other and attach them to the sheet.

## Action

- If it is not easy to conduct interviews, then ask learners to take Resource 3 home, add any thoughts they have during the week, and then bring it back to the next session for discussion/help.
- Where relevant, give an example of a CV template that learners may wish to start filling in at home, using the information on skills and achievements that they have gathered about themselves in the session.
- It may be helpful for particular groups in a follow-up session to have someone in to speak to the group about being positive/feeling better about yourself, such as a representative from local MIND.
- Ask learners to think about how they could make a 'log' of how they use the Five Ways to Wellbeing in daily life; what do they do each day or each week? Resource; the Five Ways postcards at [www.neweconomics.org/2008/10/five-ways-to-wellbeing-the-postcards](http://www.neweconomics.org/2008/10/five-ways-to-wellbeing-the-postcards)

*If you look at the information you have gathered about yourself, are you surprised by anything?*

## TIP

Help learners to complete the records by prompting with positive phrases:  
'I am good at ...',  
'I'm better at ...',  
'I have improved at ...',  
'I'm interested in ...', etc.

*Can you think of how this information may help you in the future? Can the information be used in your CV?*

# Positive thinking

## RESOURCE 1

Several different things contribute to your personality and skills.

Once you become aware of them, you can use them to give people a positive impression of yourself. You can also use them to help you choose activities or jobs that will suit you.

I passed my English exams at school. I'm teaching myself computer skills now. I used to play rugby. Oh, and I passed my driving test ...

### Skills and achievements

We learn through education and life experience. Our skills and knowledge build on our natural abilities.



I like places that are quiet. I don't like lots of noise or people around.

### Likes and dislikes

We all have things we like and dislike. They will have an effect on how you learn and what you choose to do.


My Dad encouraged my interest in English. He read with me and liked to discuss my school work.

### Influences

We may be influenced by family, friends, teachers, mentors, beliefs and things we watch or read.

|                                    |                                  |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| keeping busy                       | not having a lot to do           |
| being indoors                      | being outdoors                   |
| working alone                      | working with others              |
| going to familiar places           | going to new places              |
| keeping things tidy                | having lots of things around     |
| not having too much responsibility | making decisions or giving ideas |

|                                       |                                     |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| working with the same people each day | meeting and working with new people |
| learning new skills                   | using existing skills               |
| staying in one place                  | going out and about                 |
| sitting down                          | standing or moving                  |
| silence or quiet                      | background noise                    |
|                                       |                                     |

| Personal achievements                                                                            |               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
|  <p>(photo)</p> | Name<br>_____ |
| I have                                                                                           | I can         |
|                                                                                                  |               |
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Don't forget to include hobbies and interests!