

Top Five ideas for developing life-skills in the classroom

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Louise creates and develops content to help children explore four key areas of collaboration – resilience, creativity and leadership – in order to be the best version of themselves.

At [Role Models](#), we give children the toolkit to build their confidence, manage their emotions and develop friendships. Fun, online and in-person learning for 3-13 year olds delivered by friendly, experienced mentors.



How can teachers make life-skills part of their day-to-day lessons and why is it so vital?

One in six children aged five to 16 were identified as having a probable mental health problem in July 2021. A huge increase from one in nine in 2017. That's five children in every classroom.

But how can teachers actively help to develop these skills? Here are 5 ideas for you.

Vocalise feeling: Through being more transparent about feelings and emotions, teachers can help to develop emotional awareness within their pupils. Rather than hiding every emotion to remain “unflappable”, teachers can (where appropriate) talk through their feelings aloud. Through sharing with your class that you are feeling upset by some sad news you received, or slightly nervous about a presentation, pupils learn to understand these feelings are all normal, and although potentially uncomfortable, they are part of life.

Let them know when you don’t know: Admitting that you do not know all the answers is a golden opportunity to demonstrate a growth mindset. Getting something wrong in front of your pupils and being comfortable with fallibility is also a wonderful way to demonstrate humility and a mature approach to learning. When you are asked a question, to be able to say, “I don’t know the answer to that, let’s make a plan on how we can find out more”, is a great way to model the approach we hope pupils will adopt in their own learning.

Recognise progress: We all know the growth mindset merits of praising the process rather than the outcome, but what does this look like in the classroom, where many activities often feel outcome-focused? Find opportunities to shine a light on progress rather than perfection. Highlight and praise the most improved as well as the top scorer, and encourage pupils to judge their performance on individual progress. Did they improve their score since their last attempt? Did they improve their time?



Hunt the good stuff: Try to embed a culture and approach in your class of “hunting the good stuff”. We are all biologically programmed to focus on the bad stuff, the threats and the negatives in our day. When things go wrong, be the voice and beacon in the class to show how we can also find the good. Sharing one good thing about your day or week, or about a specific situation can help to shift perspective. If your pupils are negatively focused on the on-going effect of the pandemic, an appropriately timed question on what positives the situation has also brought can help to bring some hope and perspective.

Remember when: One of the wonderful things about teaching is how well you get to know your pupils. In those situations when a pupil is struggling or about to give up, using “remember when” can be all they need to hear in order to continue. “Remember when you struggled with mastering fractions last term? Look at the progress you’ve made to where you are now. Use that same determination to persevere with these equations.” Teachers know their pupils well and are perfectly placed to reflect back the qualities and capabilities they see.



Making time for unstructured discussion: Although time is a rare commodity in teaching, finding the time to have informal discussions with your pupils can enrich their thinking skills, help them assert their opinions and develop confidence. “Thunks” are simple questions you can pose which will often have no right or wrong answer. They can encourage your pupils to reflect and share their thoughts and build on ideas from others. Using these in your classroom can foster an environment based on curious thinking and one which focuses on how to think rather than what to think. Discussion cards or conversation prompt cards can also be a useful tool.

Implementing one or all five of these strategies into your daily or weekly routine at school, will allow you to form the rapport needed to support your children. As teachers, it’s important for us to create an environment where mental health and emotional literacy discussions are the fabric of the day.

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