



PARENTAL PULL-OUT

Parents: Please remove this centrefold carefully to avoid damaging the staples!

Empowering Beliefs Programme - Parent Guide

This short booklet is designed to give parents a brief introduction to the “*Weaving Well-Being*” programme and to help them support their children as they complete the *Empowering Beliefs* (Y6 / P7) section of the programme. The *Weaving Well-Being* programme is a well-being programme for children specifically designed to promote positive mental health and flourishing in children. The skills are based on current research from the field of **Positive Psychology**.

What is Positive Psychology?

Positive Psychology is concerned with the science of well-being, personal growth and resilience. It is founded on the concept of identifying and developing personal strengths. Positive Psychology uses evidence-based activities which help people to flourish, grow and engage with life on an optimal level whenever possible. Our lessons and activities introduce children to many of these strategies and activities which can empower them to become active participants in **creating, maintaining and boosting positive mental health** throughout their lives. Activities have been designed in accordance with the well-being elements of the PSHE/PSE/PDMU curricula.

The *Empowering Beliefs* programme consists of ten lessons which are designed to promote and cultivate positive beliefs about eight specific concepts. These are: **Developing a growth mindset, using helpful self-talk, avoiding thinking traps, acting ‘as if’, adopting a positive focus, making a difference, practising self-acceptance** and **taking action**. Each child has a Pupil Book which gradually builds into a highly personal portfolio reflecting their use and understanding of each concept.

Why are Empowering Beliefs important and how can we cultivate them in our children?

Research suggests that an individual’s beliefs have a powerful effect on their thoughts and behaviours. Self-efficacy beliefs, which are the beliefs a person holds about his/her own ability to master particular tasks or challenges, are strong predictors of motivation, self-confidence and actions.

Research also shows that beliefs are formed early in life and can become a filter through which subsequent events and situations are interpreted. Therefore, it is important to help children to examine and evaluate their beliefs and to expose them to positive beliefs which can build self-confidence and enhance well-being. Empowering beliefs, as the name suggests, are those beliefs which empower individuals by motivating and encouraging them to take action, to persevere, to maintain a positive focus and to deal constructively with failure.

In line with this research, this *Empowering Beliefs* programme introduces children to eight beliefs about specific concepts. They learn that empowering beliefs are like batteries because they provide us with power and energy. The children are encouraged to try out each belief for a week. They are given an opportunity to observe and record the effects of each belief on their feelings and behaviour. After trying out all of the beliefs on an individual basis, the children are then encouraged to continue to try all of their beliefs together.

To gain maximum benefit from the beliefs, your child should be encouraged to use them as much as possible. There is a homework task each week which encourages practical use of the strategies and concepts. In order to help and encourage your child, you may find the following information useful.



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THE BETTER YOU FEEL!



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Lesson 1: What are Empowering Beliefs?

In this lesson, children discuss and learn what empowering beliefs are. They explore the comparison between empowering beliefs and batteries. They learn that empowering beliefs are beliefs we have about ourselves which are helpful, positive and accurate. Empowering beliefs give us power because they affect our thoughts, feelings and actions. They help us to take positive action and feel good about ourselves.

How to support your child: Talk to your child about the importance of empowering beliefs. For the homework activity, help your child to choose some empowering beliefs about himself or herself. Discuss why these beliefs are important and how they might affect feelings and actions. Remind your child of these beliefs in any situations this week when they may find them helpful.

Lesson 2: Belief 1 – I can choose helpful self-talk

In this lesson, children learn that self-talk is when we talk to ourselves, about ourselves, in our minds. They learn that self-talk can be helpful, when it is accurate and leads us to take positive action. It can also be negative and unhelpful, when we criticise ourselves and doubt our own abilities. 'I Can Choose Helpful Self-Talk' is an empowering belief because it shows us that we can become aware of, question and replace negative self-talk with accurate and encouraging self-talk.



How to support your child: Discuss the meaning of self-talk with your child. Try to tune into your own self-talk and use it as an example to show how it affects your feelings and behaviour. Encourage your child to verbalise their self-talk in any challenging situations this week and see if they can identify if it is helpful or unhelpful. Encourage them to challenge unhelpful self-talk and to replace it with some of the helpful phrases from the homework activity. It is important not to simply replace negative phrases with positive ones however, as this may be unrealistic and inaccurate. The aim is to choose accurate and encouraging self-talk.

Lesson 3: Belief 2 – My effort is as important as my ability

In this lesson children discover that our talents, including our intelligence, are not fixed and can be developed and enhanced. They find out the difference between a fixed and growth mindset. They also discover that developing a growth mindset helps us understand the important role that effort and hard work play in achieving success. They learn that we can develop a growth mindset by the language we use in describing both success and setbacks in our life.



How to support your child: Ask your child to explain the difference between a fixed and growth mindset. Discuss examples of times when you used effort and hard work to improve an area in your life or to achieve a goal. Also think about and discuss examples of times when your child worked hard to improve a particular skill or talent in the past. This could be in school, sport and any other extra-curricular activity in which they participate.

Lesson 4: Belief 3 – I can recognise thinking traps

In this lesson, children are introduced to inaccurate patterns of thought which are called **Thinking Traps**. They learn that they are called **Thinking Traps** because if we think like this, we often feel trapped and stressed. Two particular **Thinking Traps** are explored, Mind-Reading and Catastrophizing. Mind-Reading is when we assume we know exactly what someone else is thinking, usually in a negative way. Catastrophizing is when we jump to the worst possible conclusion about what might happen.



How to support your child: Encourage your child to become aware of any **Thinking Traps** they may fall into this week. Encourage them to identify the type of **Thinking Trap** and to challenge their thinking using reasonable thinking. Give examples of times when you might have used **Thinking Traps** yourself and whether or not you were aware of them. Encourage your child to explore the effects of **Thinking Traps** on feelings and behaviour.

Lesson 5: Belief 4 – I can act 'as if'

This lesson helps children to consider qualities or attributes that they would like to have more of and which they often admire in other people. They discover that they can achieve these qualities by simply acting as if they already had them. These qualities are made up of a number of specific actions or behaviours and once they identify what these are and do the same themselves then they can become the person they want to be. This belief can enable them to develop a range of attributes such as confidence, courage and persistence, when required.



How to support your child: Discuss the various qualities that your child has identified as important to them and the qualities you personally admire yourself. Talk about any times in the past that you may have acted say, brave or confident even if you didn't really feel that way and how this might have helped you. If they are happy to share, ask them which attribute they have chosen for their homework and how they have looked to enhance this quality in their own life. However it is OK if they prefer to keep this information to themselves.

Lesson 6: Belief 5 – I can choose to focus on the positive

In this lesson the children learn that what we focus on becomes our reality. If we always focus on the negatives things in our life, we will find them. If we focus on our mistakes we will keep spotting them. This can make us feel bad about our life and lower our view on what we can achieve. They also learn that we can choose what we focus on and by focusing on the positive elements of our life we can significantly enhance our well-being without changing our circumstances. The more we practise this the better we will become at spotting the many positives already in our life.



How to support your child: For homework this week your child will get an opportunity to improve their ability to spot the positives events that are around them all the time. They will make a list of good things which they have noticed in their own life, or in the world, in general. Help your child to spot these positives by suggesting items that might be included on this list. Make a list of your own to get a better understanding of the exercise and so that you can help each other to enhance your ability to spot and focus on the positives already in your life each day.



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Lesson 7: Belief 6 – I can accept that I am OK just as I am

In this lesson, children learn that we are constantly bombarded with images from the media and social media showing us people who appear to look perfect and have perfect lives. They learn to remind themselves that these images do not tell the real story. They explore the idea that comparing ourselves to such images it can make it hard for us to accept that we are fine just the way we are! The children are encouraged to make a decision to accept all parts of themselves, good and not-so-good, and to realise that nobody is perfect.



How to support your child: Discuss the concept of images of unattainable perfection in the media with your child. Encourage them to make the association between the advertising industry and the fact that these images are often being used to sell products. The homework activity encourages children to look beyond appearances and reflect on their other qualities which are more important. Discuss these qualities with your child and help them identify ten such qualities. Show them that you value and appreciate these qualities.

Lesson 8: Belief 7 – I can make a difference

In this lesson, children explore the many ways in which they can make a difference to the lives of others and to the world. They discuss how small acts can add up to make a big difference. They are encouraged to see how they can make a difference and contribute positively to the world around them.



How to support your child: Provide opportunities to support your child with these activities. The homework activity encourages the children to think about 'Everyday Heroes', ordinary people they admire for making a difference in some way. Discuss this with your child and offer suggestions.

Lesson 9: Belief 8 – My actions are powerful

This lesson covers the power and importance of taking action in order to enhance your life. It explores three of the barriers to taking action, lack of confidence, believing the action is too difficult and not being clear about what actions to take. It looks at how we can overcome these barriers. The lesson also shows the children the importance of setting goals.



How to support your child: Discuss your own experience of setting and achieving goals. Which goals did you achieve and how did the actions you took help you achieve them. Did you experience any of the three barriers covered in the lesson? Talk to your child about the goal that they have set as part of their homework. What actions are they planning to take? Can you help them identify other actions? Think of any support you may be able to offer to help them achieve this goal.

Lesson 10: Charging up my batteries – Empowering Beliefs in action

In this lesson, the children get to review the importance of empowering beliefs and the eight empowering beliefs that we have encouraged them to develop throughout the programme. They also get to review their own experience of developing and implementing these empowering beliefs and to decide which of these beliefs have proven to be the most helpful to them. We give them an opportunity to monitor their use of these beliefs and the impact that this has in different areas of their life. We encourage them to continue to hold onto and act upon these beliefs in the future.

How to support your child: Discuss your own experience of setting and achieving goals. Which goals did you achieve and how did the actions you took help you achieve them. Did you experience any of the three barriers covered in the lesson? Talk to your child about the goal that they have set as part of their homework. What actions are they planning to take? Can you help them identify other actions? Think of any support you may be able to offer to help them achieve this goal.

More information on the **Weaving Well-Being** programme can be found at www.otb.ie/WWB