

# IMPOWERMENT IMPROV UNIT

## LESSON 3: CONFIDENCE

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### OBJECTIVE

To practice and apply attributes of confidence

### DESCRIPTION

For our purposes, confidence is doing something when you don't feel like doing it. It's about getting over your fear because it's always easier to not do something than to actually do it. Confidence is not always about feeling perfect. That's a myth. We assume confident people have it together all the time because that's what we see. But no one has it together 24/7. Confidence is about moving past your feelings and doing something. To that end, give students permission to reframe confidence, and to be okay with not feeling perfect. *It's okay to start off not feeling 100 percent. You'll get there.* One way to get there is to repeat exercises; another is to have students mimic the physical attributes of confidence.

**Time Management:** This lesson is structured for one class period. A class period is defined as 75 minutes. However, do not get caught up in fitting these exercises in a set time. All times are just suggestions. Improv doesn't conform to a time limit! If students are enjoying the exercises, let them go longer. The more they do them, the more they will experience and explore the concepts of the unit. Additionally, the time exercises take will depend on the discussions that occur during the debrief questions. Again, if you're having worthwhile discussions, don't cut them short to fit a schedule.

### INSTRUCTION

#### 1. Entry Prompt (5 minutes)

- a. Students enter and respond to the entry prompt in their journals. If you don't use journals in your program, consider using the prompt as a discussion starter.
  - i. What does confidence look like? Describe it.

#### 2. The Rules of Engagement (1 minute)

- a. Repeat the Rules of Engagement, or have students repeat them.

#### 3. Check-in (1 minute)

- a. Close your eyes and identify how you're feeling. This is just for you and not to be said out loud.
- b. Fill in the sentence: I feel (blank).

#### 4. I've Got Your Back (1 minute)

- a. Have everyone move around the room, pat each other on the back, and say, "I've got your back."

#### 5. Warm-ups (10 minutes)

##### a. Greetings

- i. **Objective:** To get students to instinctually act rather than think
- ii. **Round 1**
  - Students move about the room.
  - On your signal, they are to start greeting each other as they move.
  - All they have to do is say "hello" or "hi."
    - **\*\*This time, if students want to say more, that's fine. But for the kids who feel they don't know what to say, this simple text gives them something to grab on to.**
  - Let this play out for 30 seconds.
- iii. **Round 2**
  - Students move about the room.
  - **\*\*This time, specifically give students confident characters to play as they say hello:**
    - *Say hello as if you're all superheroes.*
    - *Say hello as that superhero's evil nemesis.*
    - *Say hello as if you're movie stars.*
    - *Say hello as if you're all politicians on the campaign trail.*
  - **Side-coaching note:** If you notice students are reluctant to take a risk and try on a persona, encourage them to borrow from others. Look at what others are doing. Borrow a pose or physical stance. See if they can tap into this borrowed energy, and let it spark their imagination.
  - **Time Management:** The objective is for students to get out of their heads. If students are having fun, let this exercise go on as long as you can. Try not to manage the time with these exercises.

### Debrief

Ask students: How did it feel to play those confident characters? A lot of times they'll say "It's fun" or "It was exciting" or "It was different." That's exactly what we want. Ask students: How did these characters differ from yourself? Give students a chance to try on this idea of being confident and see how much fun it is to play. It's easy to tap into.

## b. Status Walkabout

### i. Objective: To use body language to convey confidence

- Have everyone walk about the room.
- As they do, introduce the idea of high status.
  - Ask students how they think high-status people move through the world.
  - Invite them to call out their ideas for everyone else to try on.
  - Depending on their answers, I add that high-status people walk around purposefully with their shoulders back, their arms at their side, and they're not afraid to look people in the eye.
- Encourage students to adopt these postures and try them out as you speak.
- After they've tried it out, encourage them to return to neutral or just be themselves, still moving around the room.
- Introduce the idea of low status.
  - Ask students to call out how they think low-status people move through the world.
  - Depending on their answers, add that low-status people often move slower or are often slumped over. They look at the ground and avoid eye contact.
- Encourage students to adopt these postures and try them out as you speak.
- After they've tried it out, encourage them to return to neutral or just be themselves, still moving around the room.
- Divide the group in half.
- Encourage one half to adopt high status, while the other adopts low status. Have them move around the room with their status.
- Have students return to neutral.
- Then reverse it. This gives students the chance to experience both high and low status.

### Debrief

Ask students: How did it feel to adopt each status? Was one more comfortable than the other? Which status would you want to adopt if you were delivering a speech or going on a job interview? How can body language give us more confidence? Which things made you feel more confident?

## 6. Exercises (44 minutes)

### a. Poet's Corner

#### i. Objective: To apply confidence principles in a game format

- This is a gibberish exercise that you can play one of two ways.
  - Presentational style, where a pair of students at a time comes up to the front.
  - Or divide the entire class into pairs and all pairs play simultaneously. This is a good method if students have never tried gibberish before or if you need a low-stakes version.
- Students are in pairs. One person is the translator and the other is the poet.
- The poet speaks in gibberish and a made up language of their choice (Yota-pota-pota-pota!), and the translator will translate everything they say.
- Start by giving the pairs a title for a poem. For example, "It's a Beautiful Day Outside."
- The poet, the gibberish person, speaks one line of poetry or dialogue that is immediately translated by their translator.
  - POET: Yota-pota-pota-pota-pota.
  - TRANSLATOR: It's a beautiful day outside. I can see that the sun is shining.
- This is a Yes, and exercise that goes back and forth. The pairs build the story together.
- Encourage students to go big both with their gibberish and their translations. The bigger they are, the more fun they're going to have.
  - For example, encourage the poets, even though they're speaking gibberish and don't know what they're saying, to use arm movements.
  - This will help their translator be able to come up with the story they're creating together.
  - Essentially, the more confident they are in their gibberish and in their description, the more fun they're going to have.
- Use this opportunity to recap some of the elements of what demonstrates confidence, e.g., having really good eye contact, having shoulders back, and having their feet planted. These can be useful for students to help them play the game even better. And keep bringing it back to confidence. The more confident you are in your gibberish and your descriptions, the better the scene is going to be.

## Debrief

Ask students: What was funniest? Don't be afraid of this question! Because the answer never is when they tried to be funny. They're at their funniest when people risked, when they failed big, when they were confident in their choices and took chances.

Ask students: Were there things you could borrow from the warm-up that helped you feel more confident in this exercise? Did you feel more confident when you tried things like having better eye contact or planting your feet or just standing up really tall? Did those things help you?

### b. Slideshow

- i. **Objective:** To apply confidence principles in a game format through physical offers
- ii. This exercise is a natural progression from Poet's Corner because now we're going to use confidence to tell a story as a group. This is how you use confidence to help the team.
  - Invite two groups on stage: a pair of narrators for the story and five to six students who will enact the slides.
  - Ask the group: What is the relationship between the narrators?
    - I usually like to focus on a work relationship like "peers" or "boss and minion."
  - Ask the group: Where are they going?
    - You can use any kind of trip or vacation, but I find a conference is a good one to start with.
  - Ask the group: What place have they gone together? And that's the place for the conference.
    - For example, Jamaica or my basement.
  - The narrators inform their fellow employees about this conference they just attended together with a slideshow that they prepared based on their adventures.
  - Scene begins with the narrators describing their journey to the conference, by plane or bus or whatever.
  - When the narrators feel they've described enough, one of the narrators holds up a clicker and says loudly, "Click."
  - This is an indication to the slide people that they must enact a picture based on what they just heard. Then the narrators react to the slide, explaining what everyone is doing in the picture.

- **Side-coaching note:** As you're watching students play, if the people creating the slides are playing small, or if they are doing small gestures, feel free to interject and encourage them to make their gestures slightly bigger.
  - For example, if their hands are in a circle, kind of around the middle of their body, encourage them to stretch all those arms and form a bigger circle with them so that'll help stimulate more interesting offers from the narrators.
- Then we repeat the process with an event in the middle of the trip and so on.
  - I usually suggest groups do about five slides together.
  - Those creating the slides should apply confidence in their pictures with larger, more confident offers. The more they give, the more the narrators have to work with.

## Debrief

Focus on the physical choices. Ask students: What movements, postures, pictures, and tableaux work best? Why did you make those choices? How did those choices demonstrate confidence?

### 7. Concept: Fake It Till You Make It (7 minutes)

- Ask students: What does the phrase "fake it till you make it" mean? Why might this concept be important?
- Say to students: There are times in our lives when we have to do things we don't feel like doing, and this feeling never goes away. It happens to adults every single day. "Fake it till you make it" is a tool to have in your back pocket. It's a life tool. You can mirror confidence. You can use the physical attributes that demonstrate confidence even when you're not feeling so confident yourself.
- Remember that just because someone else looks like they're confident doesn't mean they have it all together, or that they're confident all the time.

### 8. Check-out (1 minute)

- Close your eyes and identify how you're feeling. This is just for you and not to be said out loud.
- Fill in the sentence: I feel (blank).
- Are you the same or different than you were at the beginning of class?

## 9. Exit Slip (5 minutes)

- a. In the last five minutes, students respond to the exit slip question and hand it in as they leave class.
  - i. In which of today's exercises did you feel confident? Or did you feel you lacked confidence? Explain your answer.

## ASSESSMENT

- Process assessment: How are students engaged in the lesson? (active listening, collaboration, discussion participation, effort)
- Skills assessment: How are students demonstrating skills? (e.g., focus, physical engagement, vocal engagement)