
LESSON 2

IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

A G E N D A

- Starter
- People Bingo
- Some of Both
- Make Them Work for You
- Conclusion
- Questions for Assessment

Objectives

Students will recognize that each individual has personal strengths.

Students will identify their individual strengths and weaknesses.

Students will identify ways in which they can use their weaknesses to their advantage.

Materials Needed

- Two copies of the “Bingo” activity sheet (#2) for each student (Parts I and II)

Starter (3 minutes)

Ask for a volunteer to play a quick game of catch. Tell the volunteer that he or she may use only one hand to catch. Gently toss a piece of chalk to the student. Then, ask him or her the following questions:

- Which hand did you use to catch the chalk?
- Why did you use this hand rather than the other one? (If the student replies that he or she is right- or left-handed, ask what this means.)
- If one of your hands is dominant, or stronger, does this mean that your other hand is useless or worthless? Why or why not?

Remind students that everyone has strengths. Point out that everyone also has some weaknesses; however, just like the less dominant hand, weaknesses do not need to be obstacles. Tell students that they will identify their individual strengths and will explore the relationship between strengths and weaknesses.

Part I People Bingo (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students recognize their individual strengths by playing a game involving group interaction.

1. STUDENTS LISTEN TO THE GAME'S DIRECTIONS.

Distribute copies of the “Bingo” activity sheet (#2), and allow time for students to review it. Then, give the following directions:

- Move around the room, and ask your classmates to sign their names in a square that describes one of their strengths. For example, if a square reads “knows how to swim,” find a classmate who knows how to swim and ask him or her to sign that square.
- Your goal is to get bingo. That means that you must fill five squares in a row with names. Completed rows may read across, down, or diagonally.
- A person's name cannot be in any winning row more than once.
- When you have filled a row with signatures, call out, “Bingo!”
- If you sign your name to something, you may be asked to prove it.
- You have five minutes to play.

2. STUDENTS PLAY THE GAME.

Tell students to begin, allowing them to move freely around the room.

After five minutes, quickly poll the class to see how many students are just one square away from bingo. Decide whether to allow an additional minute or two before ending the game.

3. STUDENTS DISCUSS THE ACTIVITY.

Ask students if they found it difficult to get signatures for the various squares. As volunteers respond, encourage them to support their responses with details and examples. Allow students to challenge one another. For example, if a student has signed his or her name to the square that reads “speaks more than one language,” the student may be asked to say a few words in another tongue. This often allows students a chance to show off their strengths, and further encourages the class to build trust and a positive rapport.

Summarize the discussion by observing that the activity sheet has 24 different squares on it, each listing a different skill or strength. Point out that everyone has strengths, which is why each student was able to sign his or her name to at least one square.

In the event a student claims that he or she felt unable to sign any square on the sheet, remind the class that it’s impossible to measure all of the skills and strengths that people have—the sheet listed only 24, which is a small number. If pressed, tell the student that he or she kept the commitment to be in class today, and that keeping commitments is a very valuable strength.

Part II Some of Both (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students will identify their individual strengths and weaknesses.

1. STUDENTS IDENTIFY THEIR PERSONAL STRENGTHS.

Distribute new copies of the “Bingo” activity sheet. Ask students to reread each square and to consider whether it lists one of their strengths or traits. If so, have them write their name in the square. If not, ask them to put an X across the square.

Point out that students have begun to identify personal strengths. Allow time for students to add additional squares across the bottom of the chart, indicating other strengths or skills they have.

2. STUDENTS IDENTIFY THEIR PERSONAL WEAKNESSES.

Explain that even the most talented, respected people have weaknesses or areas in which they don’t excel. Share a weakness of your own with the class; perhaps you are not a great speller, you can’t carry a tune, or you have trouble memorizing things. Write your example on the board.

Invite volunteers to provide examples of their personal weaknesses. Record their responses on the board. If students have difficulty offering examples, refer them to the boxes they left blank on the second “Bingo” activity sheet. The recorded list of weaknesses needs to include only a few examples.

Tell students to use the backs of their activity sheets to list some of their weaknesses.

Part III Make Them Work for You (5 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify ways to use weaknesses to their advantage.

1. STUDENTS EXPLORE HOW TO TURN WEAKNESSES INTO STRENGTHS.

Refer to the list on the board, and challenge students to convert these weaknesses into strengths. Model the thinking process for them by addressing your own example first. For example, you might say, “I’m a poor speller, so I have to proofread carefully. But when I proofread, I usually catch other mistakes, too. This makes my writing stronger than it might be if I were a good speller.”

Ensure that students understand the technique of changing their attitudes in order to convert a weakness into a strength. Explain that this technique will be useful throughout their lives. Provide examples of situations in which converting a weakness into a strength is especially useful (e.g., when being teased, during an interview).

2. STUDENTS CONTINUE BRAINSTORMING IN SMALL GROUPS.

Encourage students to brainstorm ways that one of the weaknesses listed on the board can be restated as a strength. If students cannot reasonably convert a weakness, focus the discussion on identifying ways to overcome it.

When the brainstorming session is complete, divide the class into groups of four or five. Explain that within each group, students should brainstorm ways to convert the weaknesses each student has listed on the back of his or her activity sheet. Remind students that if they cannot find ways to convert a weakness into a strength, they should brainstorm ways to overcome it. Suggest that each group appoint a volunteer to take notes on the strategies created to address their individual weaknesses.

3. STUDENTS SHARE THEIR STRATEGIES.

Invite a volunteer from each group to share some strategies that the group developed. Be sure to affirm students’ efforts and to encourage supporting ideas from other students.

Conclude the discussion by pointing out that knowing what you’re not good at is actually a real strength. Successful people focus on doing what they’re best at, and make sure to work with others who are strong in the areas in which they are weak. That way, everyone is doing what he or she is best at.

Give examples of this strategy, such as the following:

- Actors often work with business advisors who are paid to manage their finances efficiently.
- Athletes work with coaches who are talented at strategizing.
- Doctors specialize in a particular area, and work with other specialists to treat patients most effectively.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students if this process was easy or difficult. Ask them to name a few of their classmates' strengths. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Everyone has strengths. It's important to identify your own strengths so that you can focus on using them.
- Everyone also has weaknesses. It's important to identify your weaknesses so you can create strategies for overcoming them or using them to your advantage.
- Successful, respected people can always identify both their strengths and their weaknesses. It's what enables them to focus on doing what they do best, and to work with others who have strengths in areas in which they are weak.

Questions for Assessment

1. Why is it important to be aware of your own strengths?
2. List three of your personal strengths (or three things that you are good at).
3. What are some ways you can turn a weakness into a strength?

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Extension: Using Quotations

Quote: “Once we know our weaknesses they cease to do us any harm.”
—Georg C. Lichtenberg

Activity: Have students rewrite this piece of wisdom in their own words, as if passing it on to a friend or classmate.

Extension: Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Activity: Have volunteers who excel at jumping rope prepare and “perform” the poem “Jumping Double Dutch” (activity sheet #3) for the class.

Help students use their bingo cards to divide the class into other groups of experts. Have each group write and perform a poem, chant, or cheer to celebrate their areas of expertise.

Extension: Writing in Your Journal

Activity: Have students write a one-minute sales pitch or want ad (100 words or less) describing their skills, interests, and experiences. Remind students to use lively, positive language.

Have students share their first drafts with a partner for feedback before presenting their pitches/ads to the class.

Extension: Using Technology

Activity: Have students create business cards on a computer, choosing a logo and slogan that characterizes their strengths. (Specify in advance if it’s okay for them to include phone numbers/emails.)

Have students share their work in small groups, explaining their choices of words and designs.

Extension: Homework

Activity: Have students interview an adult they admire about something he or she considers a weakness, and how he or she has compensated for it or used it as an advantage. Have students summarize their findings in a paragraph.

Have the class discuss what they’ve learned. Create a chart of strategies for compensating for weaknesses.

Extension: Additional Resources

Activity: Have students read *Freak the Mighty* by Rodman Philbrick, or watch the movie based on the novel (*The Mighty*).

Discuss the relationship between the main characters—oversized, learning-disabled Max and physically disabled, genius Kevin. Have students list the strengths of each young man, and describe how they helped each other compensate for their respective weaknesses.

BINGO

Is good at math	Always works hard	Likes to join in activities	Can organize anything	Can use a computer
Speaks more than one language	Tells great stories and jokes	Is a good speller	Plays a team sport	Likes to read
Knows how to swim	Can play a musical instrument		Has a good memory	Is good at building or making things
Likes to make charts and graphs	Likes to figure out how things work	Likes to write	Likes to be in plays	Likes to help others
Is a good cook	Keeps a personal diary or journal	Likes to design posters and murals	Is a good artist	Is a great dancer