

## Unit 1 Lesson 3

### **Character Traits**

**CCSS:** CCSS.ELA.SL.7.1, L.7.1, L.7.2, L.7.3, L.7.4, L.7.6, RI.7.3, RI.7.4, W.7.10

**Essential Questions:**

- What are our personal strengths and weaknesses?
- How does knowing our strengths and weaknesses help us?
- Are our strengths and weaknesses permanent, or do they change over time?

**CASEL Competency:** Self-awareness, self-management

**Objective:** By the end of this lesson, students will be able to realistically assess and identify their personal strengths and weaknesses and understand how having a growth mindset can help them use their strengths to conquer their weaknesses.



**Activity #1: Teach the Concept**

Approximate Time: 30 mins.

Key Vocabulary: strengths, weaknesses, growth mindset, fixed mindset,

**Materials:**

- Student Guide (Lesson 3-Character Traits)



**Warm Up: (5 mins.)**

**Let's start our lesson by thinking about what our personal strengths and weaknesses are. Using the table in your Student Guide, make a list of strengths (also known as good qualities or skills) and weaknesses (also known as things that you would like to be better at or limitations that you have) that come to mind when you think of yourself. Then circle or underline the top 3 things that you're good at and the top 3 things that you most need help with. These lists are just for you, so be honest.** Display the Warm Up and have students write their responses in their Student Guide or on a piece of paper.

**Discuss: (20 mins.)**

**Explain:**

A green outline icon of two speech bubbles, one slightly overlapping the other, positioned to the left of the main text.

Everybody has strengths, or positive qualities and skills, and weaknesses, or things they would like to be better at or limitations that they have. Nobody can be good at everything. Knowing what our personal strengths and weaknesses are is helpful so that we are aware of what types of things will be easy for us and what types of things will be tricky for us. This is part of being self-aware. Having self-awareness helps us to be prepared and to know what we need to work on. For example, if one of your strengths is organization, you can use that strength to help yourself and others plan and manage projects and events. If one of your weaknesses is being very shy and anxious around people you don't know, you can plan ahead to come up with some strategies to use when you know that you'll be attending an event where you will have to interact with a lot of new people. You may notice that when I am giving examples of strengths and weaknesses, I am not talking about external features and things others can see when they look at you. I'm talking about what is inside us.

**Ask:**

**Raise your hand if it was easier for you to come up with strengths. Raise your hand if it was easier for you to come up with weaknesses. Do you think that how you perceive your strengths and weaknesses influences how you cope with those strengths and weaknesses?** Accept student responses.

**Detail:**

A psychologist named Carol Dweck researched how our beliefs that we have about ourselves have a huge impact on how successful we can be. She describes a fixed mindset as believing that we inherit our intelligence and abilities and there's nothing we can do to change how smart or creative or athletic we are. On the other hand, Dweck describes a growth mindset as believing that we can develop skills and qualities through hard work and effort. When we have a growth mindset, we believe that failure and challenge are opportunities to learn. Both types of mindsets shape our behaviors and attitudes. People with a growth mindset believe that they are in control, and outcomes are an effect of their own efforts. People with a fixed mindset believe that outcomes are an effect of circumstances and luck. When you have a growth mindset, you are more likely to persevere through difficult tasks. When you have a fixed mindset, you are more likely to give up when you are faced with a difficult task.

**Model:**

Let's explore some scenarios and decide whether the person is thinking with a fixed mindset or a growth mindset and whether they have an internal or external locus of control. Turn to the examples in your Student Guide and follow along as I read each description.

**Example 1: Maria believes that she is bad at math. Her mom and dad were never good at math, so she knows that she won't be good at math either. Month after month this school year, she has watched her grades in algebra drop. She thinks it's unfair that she should have to keep taking algebra when she is clearly going to fail. She stopped studying for tests because she already knows it won't make a difference.**

**Does Maria have a growth mindset or a fixed mindset? How do you know? Why do you think that?** Accept and discuss student answers as necessary.

**Example 2: Devin knows that writing is not easy for him. He wants to get better at it, so he signs up to take an introduction to poetry class and a creative writing class next term. Devin understands that these classes will be challenging for him, but he is excited to learn. Before the term begins, Devin meets with the teacher for each class to let them know that he may need extra help with assignments and asks if they offer any tutoring. Devin is psyched when he learns that there is a writing lab offered 3 afternoons a week where students and teachers are available for writing support. Devin knows that if he works hard and takes advantage of the extra help, he can be successful.**

**Does Devin have a growth mindset or a fixed mindset? How do you know? Why do you think that?** Accept and discuss student answers as necessary.

**Try It:**

Now I'd like you to think about the top 3 strengths and weaknesses that you came up with at the beginning of this lesson. Describe a scenario in which you perceived your strengths and weaknesses through a fixed mindset, and describe how you could have changed that situation by having a growth mindset. When students are done, have volunteers share their responses.



**Wrap Up: (5 mins.)**

**Do you tend to have more of a growth mindset or a fixed mindset? How can your awareness of your strengths and weaknesses help you through challenges?**

Display the Wrap Up and have students write their responses in their Student Guide or on a piece of paper.

**Extend the Lesson:**

If time permits, check out the online Support Materials for additional resources on this topic.

**Home Connection**

Provide each student with a copy of the family letter (from the online Support Materials) or email a copy of the letter home to each student's family.

**English Language Learners (ELL) Tip**

If students have difficulty identifying strengths and weaknesses, you may want to provide them with a word bank of character strengths and weaknesses to select from and definitions for each. Some possible examples: creative, brave, curious, fair, honest, funny, optimistic/pessimistic, collaborative, kind, persistent, shy, stubborn, and smart.

***Lesson 3 Complete! Next lesson topic: Confidence***