

JUNIOR DEBATING CLASSES 7

Session 7: Teamwork and stress management

1. Comments on worksheets from the previous session
2. Collaborative review-quiz “Numbered Heads Together”
(see Online material “Activities”, no. 35)

By applying this method, the teacher does not only check on the students’ progress. The method also emphasizes strongly the real collaboration necessary in a team: each team member – including the weaker ones – is important and has to know the answer. This method requires that weak students get help from the stronger students, and strong students have an interest in strengthening the weaker students on their teams. By working out answers in such a strict collaborative way, the group members develop a sense of individual responsibility for the success of the group. It is a team-building activity that ensures a solid basis for teamwork.

3. Reflection on strong arguments:

The teacher introduces some criteria which help to identify strong arguments:

- Its relevance/probability: if it is unlikely that a positive effect will happen, the argument might be irrelevant
- The numbers: if an argument proves that it has advantages for as many people as possible (for example: “at least more than half of...”)
- The impact: short-term consequences – and often more important – long-term consequences
- If it is practical and doable, with a view to money, time, space, staff
- Being specific: generalizations should be avoided. For whom is it an advantage? (for example: for girls? For teachers? For the elderly?)
- The value behind it: a strong principle of life
(for example: freedom of choice / justice / safety / participation / creativity)

The teacher asks the students to evaluate the strength of some arguments, for example:

- “Playing football is dangerous because you can get out of breath and collapse”
- “Classes at school should not have more than 10 students because students will learn better in small classes”

The teacher chooses more examples which are close to the experiences of her students.

4. Stress Management:

Before and in a debate a lot of feelings come up: everybody has moments of being a bit afraid, nervous, and sometimes shy. “Stage fright” is something very normal, it even makes more alert, drives creativity and helps to be really present in the situation.

But how to cope with the negative side of stress?

The teacher might ask the students: how do you deal with situations of stress? Students can share their experiences with the other students.

The teacher might add the following possibilities of coping:

► Let your body help you!

Usually the body reacts on stress – by relaxing the body stress can be reduced. Feelings can be influenced by using our body posture. Our body posture can strengthen us.

The teacher might ask students to show in their body posture how to express: being proud / being assertive / being thoughtful

► Use an anchor!

In stress, we are sometimes like a ship in troubled waters. We need a place inside us where we can drop an anchor in order to feel safe.

This place inside us is a good memory from a time when we achieved something great.

The teacher explains the following steps how to do this:

- a) Think about a situation when you had success. When was it, where was it?
- b) Think intensively about it. Feel the good feeling you had.
- c) Now install the anchor: put the thumb and the smallest finger of one hand together, keep the fingers together for 10 seconds. Repeat this gesture two more times.

When in a situation of distress, make this anchor active (put your two fingers together). This will make you remember the good feeling you had when you achieved something great. This will relax you.

(Nobody else will notice this discreet gesture.)

► Don't try to be perfect!

The problem are not the mistakes – but the idea that we have to be perfect.

Role Play or conversation about the following situation: one student in a team has a sudden blackout – students are asked to find a constructive way out of this situation.