

The 3 P's: how do you deal with setbacks?

A quick exercise for teachers
and education staff

Introduction

The way you talk to yourself shapes how you show up at work and in life.

Learned optimism is about spotting negative self-talk and pessimistic thinking then flipping the script. Next time you feel pulled down by a setback or miss the joy in a win, grab this exercise to help you pause, reflect and change your perspective.



Exercise:

When something goes wrong, our brain may interpret it in 3 unhelpful ways - sometimes called the 3 P's. You can use the 3 P's to reframe your experience. For example:

| | Pessimistic thinking | Optimistic thinking |
|-----------|---|---|
| Personal | Do you criticise and blame yourself, or consider outside factors and show self-compassion? "Everyone has lessons that don't go to plan." | "We can't always control everything that happens in the classroom." |
| Pervasive | How much does a setback affect the rest of your life? "If I can't manage this one class, I must be a bad teacher altogether." | "This was one difficult moment in one class — I'm still doing well in many other areas of my teaching." |
| Permanent | Do you see setbacks as temporary or permanent? "It's always like this with this class. I'll never improve." | "Today was difficult, but it doesn't mean future lessons will be." "I've had good lessons before, and I will again." |

Promoting optimistic thinking: try it yourself



Directions:

- 1 Pick a recent challenging experience from work.
- 2 Write out how you think about the situation in the Personal, Pervasive and Permanent boxes.
- 3 Change your point of view and write out how the experience could be viewed in a more optimistic way on the following page.

Personal

Permanent

Pervasive

