

## EMPOWERMENT

**Overview:** Undoubtedly, we will all encounter something in life that challenges us (and likely more than once). What's important is to know that we have the power within ourselves and supports to overcome them. This lesson helps students visualize their strengths, understand their challenges, and discover ways to overcome them.

### SD Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success:

#### K-12 College, Career, and Life-Ready Competencies for Every Student:

- B-SMS 6. Ability to identify and overcome barriers
- B-SMS 10. Ability to manage transitions and adapt to change
- B-LS 2. Creative approach to learning, tasks, and problem solving

**Estimated time:** 15-20 minutes

### Materials:

- Boat picture (at end of lesson)
- Washer with a string tied on it for each student



### Instructions:

1. Ask the students if they know what the word "empowerment" means.
  - a. Tell them that it essentially is defined as "the act of giving power to someone to do something."
2. Show the video clip from the movie, "Life of Pi" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zf0sIKypl4g>
  - a. Ask students what examples of empowerment they saw in the clip?
    - i. Examples: The boy, Pi, throws the fish to the tiger, the school of fish fly towards the boat, and an edible fish flies into the boat for him to eat, a tool in the boat for Pi to utilize, etc.
  - b. Ask students to share some examples of how they've seen people be empowered.
3. Explain that in the movie clip, Pi encountered a lot of challenges in the boat. We all experience some kind of challenge in our lives, but we also have strengths and supports that keep us going and build us up. Let's spend a little bit of time discovering what those are.
4. Distribute boat pictures to each student.
  - a. In the boat, have students write down all of the things that are strengths for them.  
(You may have to provide some examples, such as attitudes, behaviors, people, activities, etc.)
  - b. In the water surrounding the boat, have students write down some of the challenges that could be there for them.
  - c. On the oar, have students list things that they don't yet have, but they think could help them on

their journey (such as attitudes, people, experiences).

5. Split the students up into small groups of 4-5 students.
  - a. Ask the small groups to share one thing with each other that is a strength for them.
  - b. Within their small groups, have students brainstorm how they can obtain the things they put on their oars.
6. Distribute the washers to students.
  - a. Tell students to hold the string attached to the washer between their fingers and try to get the washer to be as still as possible. (The picture to the right shows a person holding the string attached to the washer.)
  - b. Tell students that while trying to keep it still, think “back and forth, back and forth”. (Keep repeating this and notice that the students’ pendulums should be moving back and forth.)
  - c. Now ask students to think “move in circles” (keep repeating until you notice their pendulums moving in circles).
  - d. Explain to students that this is a small activity to show that what we focus on and what we “put our minds to” can empower us to make our future happen.



#### **Processing/Application Questions:**

- When we defined empowerment in the beginning, we mentioned it was essentially giving power to someone to do something. Can we empower ourselves? How so?
- Why is it important to make ourselves aware of our strengths? Challenges?
- What are some supports you listed on your oars to help you overcome challenges?

*Adapted from:*

*McDonald, G., & McDonald, M. (2018, July). Lessons that engage & inspire [Conference session], ASCA Conference, Los Angeles, CA, United States.*



