



FINDING HEROES

INTRODUCTION

MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION

LESSON PLAN: BEGINNING THE JOURNEY - THE CALL TO ADVENTURE

INTRODUCTION

In the first session of the Finding Heroes introduction, your students were introduced to the concept of The Heroes Journey and how it can be applied to their experience of life. In this session, you will be exploring, the stages of 'The Call to Adventure' and entering the 'Special World' and how these relate specifically to the Finding Heroes classes you will be running with the students throughout this program.

The ability to self-reflect, personally and privately, is something people learn to do with time and experience. It is a process that we discover and improve with age and maturity. However, it doesn't always happen easily for young people. For a young person, often their greatest desire is simply to be accepted by their peers. This influences their behaviour and how they choose to interact with each other, in ways that can be either destructive or constructive. A crucial ingredient in getting the most out of this work is by harnessing the power of the group dynamic and ensuring that the environment in which it takes place is one that is safe, open, expressive, and accepting of difference.

In order to create this 'safe space', it is very important to spend time setting clear boundaries, building trust and respect within the group and allowing students to understand its power and value. These lessons are designed to be a little different from a traditional classroom lesson. Understandably, due to the nature of 'personal development' work, it will be challenging for students to let down their usual guard from the 'school yard' environment. They may at first be reluctant to express and share with each other honestly.

The purpose of this workshop is to address this reluctance and assist in creating the 'safe space'. Students will be required to 'buy in' and decide whether or not they are open to the experience and commit to supporting each other on the journey. It is an opportunity for the students to connect with each other, in this new environment, and experience the positive benefits of answering 'The Call to Adventure' and journeying together into 'The Special World' of the Finding Heroes Workshops.

THEORY

The Finding Heroes program draws upon some of the principals of 'group therapy' work. In 'group therapy' sessions, members are generally encouraged to discuss issues openly and honestly. The facilitator works to create an atmosphere of trust and acceptance that encourages members to support one another. Individuals can benefit in growth and problem solving, in ways not always achievable in one-on-one therapy, through the offering and exploration of multiple perspectives, experiences and relationships.

The Reach Facilitators and Support Team are well versed in the methods of group therapy and have applied some of these techniques and applications to the work of the Finding Heroes Program. As a teacher, you are in no way expected to have the expertise to run traditional 'group therapy' sessions. However by understanding how group therapy works and the power of group dynamics, you will be empowered to facilitate the sharing of stories, thoughts, ideas and feelings amongst your students with positive results.

Group therapy principals, as outlined in 'The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy', by Irvin D. Yalom, supports that by working in groups, students are encouraged to learn and help each other by sharing information. By sharing their strengths and contributing to the group, students also experience a sense of



belonging and acceptance, boosting their self-esteem and confidence. They have the opportunity to give and receive feedback, learn new behaviours through modelling off others and trying these new behaviours in the safe group environment. They will have the opportunity to develop their social skills, learn responsibility, relate with each other and experience genuine empathy and connection by understanding that, no matter what they are experiencing in their lives, they are never alone and that their experiences are universal. These 'positive' experiences are highly recommended for the personal development and wellbeing of young people.

According to 'The Happiness Advantage' by Shawn Achor, recent studies in Neuroplasticity indicate that the human brain actually has the ability to rewire itself, and is not 'fixed' during adolescence as once believed. This means that we all have the potential to become more positive, creative, resilient and productive people by practicing skills and participating in experiences that foster these very qualities. According to these studies and the theoretical foundations of Positive Psychology, the more experiences a young person can have of a positive nature, the greater their potential is to develop qualities such as resilience, self efficacy, and positive self-identity.

OBJECTIVES

The following activities are designed to allow students to:

- Understand the nature of the Finding Heroes program and commit to the journey as a united group
- Establish boundaries, form agreements and develop trust to create a 'safe' environment
- Explore and connect with each other in this new 'safe' environment
- Learn about themselves and each other
- Build respect for themselves and for each other
- Experience the benefits, both individually and collectively, of this program.

SET UP

Prior to the class you will need access to:

- Masking tape
- Enough room for students to walk around - clear the tables and chairs to the side.

ACTIVITY RUNNING SHEET AND SCRIPT

Share with the class the three Finding Hero participation agreements:

- Show respect and listen – hands up
- What is said in the room stays in the room – emphasise that this is unless the teacher is worried about the safety or the student or someone else
- Be honest, open and courageous.

ACTIVITY 1: Two truths and a lie: how well do we know each other?

Instructions

- 1) Ask students to think of 3 statements about themselves:
 - Two of which are true
 - One of which is a lie.

These can be about any topic they choose. E.g. About their families, hobbies, experiences they have had or goals and passions etc.

- 2) Explain to the class that the aim of the activity is to see if they can guess which of the three statements is a lie. Encourage students to have fun and get creative with the lie that they come up with.
- 3) Once each student has identified their three statements (two truths and one lie), ask the students to walk around the room and discuss with as many other students as they can, and take turns sharing their three statements and trying to guess which one is the lie.

Tip:

Encourage students to ask each other questions about the statements they share. The activity is also an opportunity for the students to begin to get to know each other on a deeper level. Allow 5-10 minutes for students to mingle and experience with several different partners.

Debrief

Discuss the following:

- How did the students find the activity? Was it fun? Challenging? Interesting? etc
- Explore whether students were accurate in their guesses or whether they guessed incorrectly
- Explore how they made their guesses – for example, reading cues such as body language, already friends, remembered from past conversations, observations etc.
- Ask students whether they learnt anything new and/or interesting about people in their class and to share with the whole group where appropriate.
- Explore the idea that there is always more we can learn about each other.
- Pose the question: 'We spend a lot of time together as a class, but how well do we really know each other?'

ACTIVITY 2: 'Teachers are human too?'

Aim

- ***Lead by example. Seeing you express honestly will encourage students to feel connected and assured that they are in a safe space.***
- ***Provoke thought. There is more to us than meets the eye. How well do we know really each other?***

Instructions

- 1) Explain to the students that this next section is about exploring how well they know you as a person.
- 2) Begin by asking the class to share some things they think they know about you. You may wish to write these on the board.

Tip

If students struggle to participate, encourage them to begin with the obvious such as:

- ***You are a teacher***
 - ***The subjects you teach***
 - ***You are married or single***
 - ***You may or may not have children***
 - ***Day-to-day facts E.g. favourite football team, favourite music, hobbies***
- 3) If you feel open to doing so, continue by asking students to share some of the assumptions, judgements or rumours they may have heard about you. Give them permission to say things they would otherwise be less likely to say in front of you.

- 4) Eventually, with this list, the students will have provided a snap shot picture of who they think you are. Initiate a brief discussion with the students about how accurate they believe this snapshot might be.
- 5) Conclude this section by acknowledging that this is only a snapshot, just as the students provided a snapshot of themselves with their truths in Activity 1: Two Truths and a Lie.
- 6) Now it is time to show that there is more to you than the things they think they know about you. Explain to the students that you would like to take this opportunity to show another side of yourself, to share a part of you beyond the things that they think they already know. (*Remember: One of the key principles of Finding Heroes is that we never ask the young people to do something that we are not prepared to do ourselves.*)

Tip

Before you begin this next stage, ensure the group is focused and remind them of the agreements. You may wish to acknowledge that you are about to take a risk by asking for their respect and support in doing so.

- 7) Once you feel safe, share with your students something about you that they may not know. It can be an experience you have had, positive or negative, recent or from when you were younger. You may choose to share about your family, childhood, passions or aspirations.

The aim is to share honestly, and from a place of connection. It may be useful to also include how that experience shaped you and what you learnt from it.

- 8) After sharing, ask students if they would like to ask you any questions. If there are any questions that you don't feel comfortable answering, simply say that you don't feel comfortable answering that question and provide the reason why.

ACTIVITY 3: Who am I?

Instructions

- 1) Keeping the energy in a reflective space, ask students to form groups of three or four. Encourage them to form groups with people they may not know that well.
- 2) Once groups have settled, explain to your class that they are all now going to get the opportunity to share in the way same you did.
- 3) Reassure students that this activity isn't about sharing their deepest darkest secrets or sharing something that they don't want people to know about them, but just sharing something about themselves that goes a little bit deeper than the assumptions and judgements we make of each other.

Tip

Naturally, some students may still become anxious about this activity. It is important to normalise the anxiety by acknowledging that the activity might be challenging and even scary but reassure them that there is positive value. Ask the students why they believe it would be a positive experience to open up and share with each other. Allowing the peer group to acknowledge the positive benefits of the activity will further contribute to ensuring that the environment is a 'safe space'.

- 4) When the class is ready, allow each student 2-3 mins to share in their small groups.

Tip

Some young people may find it hard to think of something to share, so make yourself available and float around groups to help anyone who may be struggling. Feel free to offer suggestions to prompt students such as sharing something about your family, your culture, experiences you have had, good times, hard times, achievements etc.

- 5) After three minutes, let students know that they should move on to the next person in their group. Once all students have shared, bring the small groups back together into one big group.

DEBRIEF

Discuss the following in your own unique way:

- How are students feeling after sharing?
- Did people find it easy or hard? What made it easy and/or hard to share?
- How often do you spend the time to share with each other honestly?
- What is the value in sharing with each other honestly?
- Has the group changed at all?
- Compare the trust and respect levels of the group from the very start of the lesson until now.
- Remind students of the Heroes Journey, particularly the 'Call to Adventure' and 'The Special World' and initiate a discussion. How do these stages relate to what they have experienced in this session?

Tip

Explain to the students that through the Finding Heroes Program, they will each be experiencing their own version of the Heroes Journey and that this session was part of the 'Call to Adventure'. During the activities they were challenged with the opportunity to embark on an adventure. The session was a glimpse of 'The Special World' where they experienced trust, respect and connection. This session is an opportunity to answer the call. It is also important to normalize the experience for the students and ensure that they understand that often after sharing, it is normal to feel a wide range of emotions. This may be a new experience for many of them. Inform students that they may feel more emotional, less emotional, more or less hungry, more tired, less tired etc. Remind students of the resources and people available to them to chat afterwards if they feel the need.

ACTIVITY 4: Commitment to the journey

Aim

- *To use the Heroes Journey stages of 'The Call to Adventure' and 'The Special World' as a conceptual framework to assist students in better understanding what they have experienced in the session and prepare for the Finding Heroes Program journey they will continue to embark on together, as a class.*
- *To offer the students the opportunity to contribute to shaping their environment and acknowledge the journey they will embark on as a class.*
- *To provide the opportunity for students to commit to respecting each other and the 'safe space'.*

Instructions

- 1) Share with the class the three Finding Hero participation agreements as outlined below. Once the agreements have been finalised place a long line of masking tape on the floor.
 - Show respect and listen – hands up

- What is said in the room stays in the room – emphasise that this is unless the teacher is worried about the safety of the student or someone else
 - Be honest, open and courageous.
- 2) Explain to students that the line represents the opportunity that comes with being a part of the Finding Heroes program. Highlight to the group that these lessons are going to be about much more than just Maths, Science and English and that in these lessons, they will explore life. The line also represents the threshold between the 'Ordinary World' (the usual school yard environment and day-to-day life as they know it) and the 'Special' World (the experiences they will have once they embark on the Finding Heroes journey)
 - 3) Ask the students, if they feel they are up for the challenge of being a part of the journey as a group – they are to step over the line of masking tape. Reassure them that going on the journey simply means committing to respecting themselves, each other and the 'safe space' by expressing themselves honestly. If they feel committed to that, then the journey has already begun for them, and they can cross the line.

Tips

Some students may choose not to step across the line. If this happens, firstly affirm those students for their courage as it is important for them not to be judged by the other students for their choice. Explain that everyone has the right to make their own choices and ask if they would mind sharing why they chose not to cross? If their answer is honest, then thank them for sharing and check in with the rest of the class for their feedback on how they feel about the situation.

Chances are the group will assist you in supporting those who choose not to cross by offering encouragement and words of respect and support. This means that even if students still choose not to cross the threshold physically, whether they know it or not, they have actually already crossed the threshold into the 'Special World' by participating in honest self-expression and experiencing acceptance and affirmation from the group. This is another angle that may assist in facilitating this situation.

KEY LEARNING AND UNIVERSAL WISDOM

Close the session by asking a few students to share how they are feeling and what they will take away from the session. Use the following points as a guideline to initiate questions and discussion:

- The Finding Heroes program is a unique opportunity for students to learn more about themselves and each other. Remind them that this is the beginning of a journey and that it is something they will do together.
- Give the group an opportunity to list the benefits they have already experienced in this session and acknowledge each other and the commitment shown.
- By establishing boundaries, forming agreements and developing trust to create a 'safe' environment, students have the opportunity to experience a positive connection with each other and have fun while they do it. Allow them to affirm this for each other by acknowledging examples of moments they enjoyed and learned from.
- Acknowledge that having respect for themselves and for each other opens up opportunities to feel good about themselves and bond with the group. Life is a lot more enjoyable when experiencing it with others. Give them the opportunity to express gratitude or acknowledge students who may have demonstrated courage.



- The Finding Heroes Program is an opportunity to spend time on things we don't always get a chance to explore in every day school life. Reinforce the agreement of what was said in the room stays in the room and that if they feel the need to talk about what happened and what they heard then you are available to chat.

PRACTICE

As the studies in 'Neuroplasticity' and Positive Psychology indicate, personal development work is far more effective when students continue to practice what they learn in their lives outside the classroom. By understanding the value of practicing and acknowledging the benefits, your students may even choose to create their own ways to practice. However, to begin with here are some suggestions you can offer your students:

- Encourage students to keep a Finding Heroes Journal. Suggest that they find or purchase a special blank exercise book where they can capture their thoughts and note the outcomes of the session. Highlight that this is great way to capture the life learning in a creative way of their own that is not going to be assessed and that they can share or keep private as they choose. In the past, many students have gone on to treasure their Finding Heroes Journals and hold them as important mementos for many years later.
- Encourage students to write, draw, paint-express in any way that feels meaningful, such as how they feel in the days after the first session. This activity is simply to encourage students to become aware of how they feel and how they are impacted.
- Build a word bank in the classroom. Pin up some butcher paper marked 'Finding Heroes Word Bank' and when students recognise strengths in the class or others or recognise what is going well in the program, they can have a space dedicated to landmark the Finding Heroes journey.

RESOURCES

Web links – for teachers only

- **Brene Brown: The power of vulnerability (20.50min)**
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCvmsMzIF7o>
- **Sir Ken Robinson: RSA Animate - Changing Education Paradigms (11.41min)**
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcDGpL4U>
- **What Is The Happiness Advantage? By Shawn Achor (2.39 min)**
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TBRy3QrRGFI>

Films

The following films are examples of teachers relating and working with their students on a very human and personal level. There are moments of sharing stories and opening up to one another between students and teachers and given an insight into the Finding Heroes Journey

- **Freedom Writers trailer, 2007 (2.28 min) – available for purchase on itunes movies**
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTOL1U-Rdj4>
- **Coach Carter trailer (1.17min), 2005 - available for purchase and rental on itunes movies**
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPGBMb1E2UE>
- **Dead Poets Society trailer (2.45min), 1989**
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrBk780aOis>
- **Finding Joe trailer, 2011 (2.13min) – available on itunes movies for rent or purchase.**
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTVKmZZN39I>



As highlighted in the first lesson plan, Finding Joe in an exploration of famed mythologist, Joseph Campbell's studies, and the Heroes Journey continuing impact on culture.

Books

'Tuesdays with Morrie'

by Mitch Albom, 1997

A true story about a student and his teacher reconnecting - 16 years after their time together in college. As the teacher/mentor is on his deathbed they revisit moments and explore universal lessons that can be learnt by everyone.

'The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy'

by Irvin D. Yalom

Article

A final lesson from TED: conversations + connection by Brene Brown

<http://www.ordinarycourage.com/>

Theory Information

What is Group Therapy?

<http://psychology.about.com/od/psychotherapy/f/group-therapy.htm>

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