

# Motivation & Attributional Beliefs

## Materials

- Chart paper, markers, and tape OR white board
- Paper for students to take notes
- Motivation/Beliefs Scenarios
- Students should bring a pen or a pencil

## Preparation

- NONE

## Part 1

- Introduce Cornell Notes and have students take Cornell Notes on today's lesson. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4uzQEWj0X8>)
  - Use chart paper to draw example.
  - Large space = content. *This is where you put your typical notes for the day. Include everything you feel is important from the lecture or reading.*
  - Left side = big questions. *This is where you put key ideas, definitions, and specific questions you create after the lecture or reading.*
  - Bottom = summary. *What is this topic about? How would I explain this to a 5-year-old who has never heard of this topic before? Keep it simple and use your own words. If you can't explain it in your own words, you don't know it!*

## Part 2

- Notes for group leader before you start:
  - Students with high academic achievement and positive self-concept tend to attribute academic success to their ability (internal, stable, and uncontrollable factors) and effort (internal, stable, and controllable). This type of student tends to attribute failure to either effort (internal, unstable, controllable factors) or task difficulty or teachers' instruction (external, unstable, uncontrollable).
  - Underachieving students tend to doubt their ability and attribute success to luck or task difficulty level; they tend not to think it is themselves who made it happen even when they succeed. For these students, success does not help them increase confidence. Thus, helping students experience success, followed by assisting students to attribute their success to effort, rather than ability, will increase chances for students to develop positive attributional beliefs.
- *School counselors hear a lot of different explanations for why students either did or did not do well on a task like a homework assignment, project, or test. What do you think some of those reasons would be for why the student did well? What about reasons why they did poorly?*
  - Examples might include, "I find this class interesting, I like the teacher, I'm just not good at math, I don't care about that class, I didn't try, etc..."
- *Our perceptions and beliefs about our abilities are important because they influence our feelings of confidence, our expectations for the future, and our motivation to try things and not give up.*
  - *In turn, all of these things influence our success in school!*
- Provide visual representation while explaining the what attributional beliefs mean with the three domains: (i.e. draw out on chart paper while "lecturing" so students can take notes.)

- \*I've attached an example of how my visual representation turned out after doing this activity with 11<sup>th</sup> grade boys in Motivation & Study Skills Group.
  - **Attributional beliefs** – *What we “attribute” or give credit to for our successes and failures. Attributional beliefs are the foundation of what motivates us to succeed!*
  - **Locus of control** [internal (ability, effort) / external (luck, task difficulty)]
    - *We also talk about motivation as either **intrinsic** or **extrinsic**. These concepts are very similar to internal and external locus of control. You are intrinsically motivated to do something if the task is interesting, challenging, or sparks your curiosity. You are extrinsically motivated to do something if you are doing the task in order to obtain some sort of outcome, like receiving a reward or avoiding a punishment.*
  - **Stability over time** [stable (ability, task difficulty) / unstable-changeable (effort, luck)]
  - **Controllability** [controllable (immediate effort, getting help from a counselor, mood) / uncontrollable (ability level in general, task difficulty)]

### Part 3

- Ask students to volunteer to read one of the three Motivation/Beliefs Scenarios. Discuss where the students in the scenarios fit in each of the three domains.
  - *Which students from these scenarios do you think are the most successful?*
  - *For the students who aren't doing so well, how could they change their perspective and beliefs in order to do better? What could they DO to change their situations?*

### Part 4: Post-Activity Discussion

- Have students apply today's lesson to themselves.
  - Ask students to volunteer their own examples of their own attributional beliefs
  - Discuss ways students can use all this information to promote success in school
    - *ex: Attributing failing a test to lack of effort may lead you to decide to study more on your next test; more effort = better grade.*
- Review students' Cornell Notes
  - *Now, let's go back and take a look at your Cornell Notes!*
  - *Do you have a good idea of what we talked about today based on your notes?*
  - *What questions did you come up with on the left hand side?*
  - *How would you explain this to a five-year-old? (i.e. your summary at the bottom!)*
  - *How could you apply this to the iPad/notability? What about in your future? You don't take notes only if you're going to college, you also need to take notes in meetings and during presentations in any work setting.*

John has been struggling with math this year, but last week he got a B on his Algebra II unit test. He has been working with his school counselor on study strategies and watching YouTube videos to get extra help on concepts he doesn't understand. When he sees his counselor this week, he tells her, "This is the first time I've actually studied for one of these tests. I guess when I actually try, I do better."

Locus of control: internal (effort)

Stability over time: unstable (effort)

Controllability: controllable (effort, getting help)

Jane is nervous about her speech in English next block. She tells her friends at lunch, "I'm just terrible at these things and I always have to go first. I have the worst luck!"

Locus of control: internal (natural ability) AND external (luck)

Stability over time: stable (natural ability) AND unstable (luck)

Controllability: uncontrollable (natural ability, luck)

Sarah failed her US History quiz. When her parents see her grade on PowerSchool, they ask her why she didn't do well. She tells them, "The teacher sucks. All he does is talk and the whole class isn't learning anything. Then we get to the quizzes and tests and they're super hard! It's not my fault!"

Locus of control: external (task difficulty)

Stability over time: stable (task difficulty)

Controllability: uncontrollable (task difficulty)