



LESSON PLAN

Suggestions for using *Canadian Social Trends* in the classroom

“Taking charge: Perceptions of control over life chances”

Objectives

- To consider what “mastery” means and how it may differ between individuals.
- To understand why feeling in control of one’s life may influence one’s future.

Curriculum areas: social studies, family studies, communications, life skills

Classroom instructions

1. Read “Taking charge: Perceptions of control over life chances.” Why is mastery important and what contributes to a sense of mastery? In what circumstances do you think that having a lot of control is useful? What do you think may happen to people who don’t believe they can change the important things in their lives?
2. One theme that emerges from this study is “reciprocity,” the idea that a person’s sense of mastery may be created and sustained in a kind of feedback loop. It seems that you need to be successful to feel in control of your life, but you may also need to feel in control of your life to be successful. Do you think this is true? If it is, does this mean that “acting” or “playing a part” is an important element of mastery?
3. The article shows that young people record some of the highest scores on the mastery scale. Yet adolescence is often a time when people feel most vulnerable to the actions and opinions of other people. How would you explain the high sense of mastery expressed by Canadians in their late teens?
4. Canadians born abroad have lower mastery scores than Canadians who were born here. The article suggests that immigrants may feel less in control of their lives because they may have difficulty integrating into the labour market. But other factors may also sap their confidence, such as poor language skills, social isolation or even cultural traditions and expectations. How can recent Canadian immigrants be helped to improve their belief that they control events in their lives?
5. When people are really happy, they may say they feel like “the king of the world.” The article finds that the happier people are, the higher their mastery scores. Make a list of sayings and expressions that people use to describe their feelings, and see how many of them reflect the characteristics associated with a sense of mastery.

Using other resources

See Teacher Resources by Subject at www.statcan.ca/english/edu/teachers.htm

Educators

You may photocopy “Lesson plan” or any item or article in *Canadian Social Trends* for use in your classroom.