



## OSKAR & THE LAST STRAW Think Like A Caterpillar

Grade Levels: 2-3

*This lesson is adapted from Sanford Harmony. For more information on Sanford Harmony's free classroom resources that align with CASEL SEL competencies, visit [sanfordharmony.org](http://sanfordharmony.org).*

**Growth Mindset:** the belief that you can become better at something with hard work and practice

**Fixed Mindset:** the belief that you are good or bad at something and can't get better at it

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### OBJECTIVE

- Students will explore the perspective that human nature and abilities can change.
- Students will explore the connection between mindset and associated feelings and actions.

### MATERIALS

- Black or white board; chalk or dry erase markers
- Paper, erasers, markers, crayons, colored pencils, pens, etc.
- "Butterfly" templates (attached)

### PROCEDURE

1. Tell students that today they will be exploring how people think about change and how these thoughts influence feelings and actions. Write the following statements on the board:
  - I will always be in [second] grade.
  - I will never get any taller.
  - I will never learn anything new.
  - I will never meet any new people.

Ask students, "What if I told you that these statements were true? Would you believe me? Why or why not?"

Everyone is constantly growing and changing. We get taller. We grow up. We learn new things. We improve our skills. We meet new people. And we have new experiences. Sometimes, people forget change is possible and believe the statements on the board about themselves and others.

It is important for us to remind ourselves that people change. Ask students why it is important to recognize that they or others can change abilities or personalities.

(Examples: We give people a chance. We push ourselves to get better. We don't give up. We try to help others. We don't judge people for things they did in the past. We work hard to improve ourselves.)

2. Have students partner up. Instruct them to discuss and write down ways they have changed since they were in kindergarten. Invite students to share their responses with the class. Some questions may include:
  - What are some of the things you learned to do since you were in kindergarten?
  - How has your personality changed?
  - Did you and your partner have similar responses?
  - Why do people do or say things that surprise us sometimes?
  - Why would it be boring if we never changed our abilities and personalities?
3. Students have discussed the importance of recognizing change in themselves and others. They will now practice recognizing and coming up with thoughts that remind them people can change. This belief is called **growth mindset**—the belief that people can become better at something with hard work and practice. We can call thoughts that remind us people can change **Caterpillar Thoughts**. Ask students why a caterpillar is a good example that people can change. (Caterpillars change into butterflies. They can also change by camouflaging themselves to hide from predators.)

Ask students what insect looks like a caterpillar and would be a good example of people who think they cannot change (people with a **fixed mindset**). A worm is a good example of this. That's because once worms hatch they'll always be worms; they don't change their form. They also have the ability to replace lost segments so that they return to their original form. Thus, students can call thoughts that view people as unchangeable **Worm Thoughts**.

4. Tell students the way people think about things often affects their feelings. In turn, these feelings can make people choose productive or unproductive actions. This can be illustrated on the board as:

Thought → Feeling → Action

The class will now explore this idea as a group with different situations. For each situation, brainstorm as a group how a Worm Thought can create a negative action and a Caterpillar Thought can create a positive action, writing students' suggestions on the board under Thought → Feeling → Action.

### **Situations**

- You're taking a math test and are having a hard time figuring out one of the questions.
- You and your friends are playing tetherball at recess. You notice Jason—one of your classmates who is usually very quiet—sitting by himself and reading a book.
- While you are walking down the hallway, Sally tells you that your shirt looks like it belongs on a kindergarten student. Sally's friends start laughing.

### **Worm Thought Example**

*Situation: You're taking a math test and are having a hard time figuring out one of the questions.*

**Thought** → **Feeling** → **Action**  
I'm so bad at math. Frustrated You get distracted and only complete half the test.

### **Caterpillar Thought Example**

*Situation: While you are walking down the hallway, Sally tells you that your shirt looks like it belongs on a kindergarten student. Sally's friends start laughing.*

**Thought** → **Feeling** → **Action**  
Sally shouldn't talk to people that way. Something must be bothering her. Determined You explain the situation to a teacher and ask for help.

5. When the class is finished exploring the different situations, ask students to consider how Caterpillar and Worm Thoughts differ from each other. How did they lead to different feelings and actions? See if students can identify how people can change Worm thoughts to Caterpillar Thoughts.
6. Distribute one copy of the "Butterfly" template to each student. Instruct students to think about something they want to get better at in school—perhaps a class subject they are struggling with or something they want to learn. Have students identify a Caterpillar Thought for this goal that they can remind themselves of when things get difficult. Students can write this thought on their "Butterfly" templates and decorate them as a reminder for when things get difficult. Teachers can collect each student's butterfly and display it on a board, perhaps with the title "Think like a Caterpillar, and Fly like a Butterfly!"
7. Once students have finished their butterflies, help them reflect on what they learned. Ask students how they can remind themselves to think like a caterpillar instead of a worm. How will they know if they are thinking like a caterpillar or a worm? What can a person do if they see someone thinking like a worm?

Before upcoming potentially stressful situations like tests, assist students by identifying relevant Caterpillar Thoughts and positive actions they can take when they encounter difficulties.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## **OSKAR & THE LAST STRAW**

### **Think Like A Caterpillar**

Draw your goal in this butterfly. Then, draw or write Caterpillar Thoughts around the wings. Caterpillar Thoughts will help you when things get difficult.

