

## Upper Intermediate – Work On Your Weaknesses

**Aim:** to help students identify areas of weakness and to come up with a plan to improve them.

**Lead-in:** Ask students to draw a table in their notebooks with two columns:

Strength	Weakness

Then write the following on the board: *optimistic, pessimistic, quiet, talkative, a perfectionist, easy-going, taking risks, listening to others*. Ask students to put the phrases into the column in the table where they think they should go.

Ask students to work in pairs and compare their completed table with their partner. They should explain which column they put each phrase in, and say why. Some students may have different answers to their partner's.

Encourage students to think about the ways in which some perceived weaknesses might be strengths (e.g., being pessimistic can be a weakness because it is a negative way of thinking and could mean you are afraid of change or the future. However, it could be seen as a strength because looking at things in a negative way could be considered realistic).

Ask some volunteers to say if any of the phrases in the table apply to them, and whether they consider them to be weaknesses or strengths.

**Choose A Scenario:** Ask students to work in pairs and choose one of the three scenarios (A–C). Explain to students that they should identify three weaknesses in the main character in their scenario. If they identify more than three, that's great!

For example, in A, Carlos's weaknesses might be that he is a perfectionist, isn't great at team working and he's pessimistic. In B, Bea's weaknesses might be that she is too easy-going, isn't realistic, she's over-confident and not organised. In C, Kieran's weaknesses might be that he is shy and lacking in confidence, pessimistic and he's afraid of taking risks. Write on the board: *What should the person do now? What could they have done to*

*avoid the situation?* Ask students to think about the immediate situation and how the person handled it, and to discuss their ideas with their partner.

Ask students to discuss and choose one main weakness out of the three (or more) they identified that the person should focus on improving in the future. Ask them to think of ways the person can change their behaviour to improve this weakness.

Ask students to identify any strengths the person displays in the scenario. Would any of their weaknesses actually be strengths in another situation? Encourage students to look at the Reflection Point while they are working.

**Reflection Point:** Explain to students that weaknesses are things that can hold us back from doing what we want. It is only by being honest with ourselves that we can identify weaknesses and take action to improve things about our behaviour that we want to change. We should focus on one thing at a time, and not be too hard on ourselves.

**Class discussion:** Ask each pair to work with another pair who chose the same scenario. Ask students to compare the weaknesses they identified in each person's behaviour. Did they identify the same ones? Ask students to compare their solutions in the scenario and their ideas for how the person could have avoided the situation. Did they have the same ideas?

Ask students to discuss whether they chose the same main weakness for the person in the scenario to focus on and to justify their choice.

Write the following on the board:

*What is important is the presence of strengths, not an absence of weaknesses.*

Allow groups time to discuss the statement before holding a whole-class discussion. Ask, *should we focus on improving our weaknesses or improving our strengths?*

*How can we turn our weaknesses into strengths?*

**Work alone:** Ask students to work alone and choose a second scenario from A–C and follow the same steps as in section 2. Once they have finished, invite volunteers to present their ideas about their scenario to the class.

**Extension:** Explain to students that they are going to do an exercise to develop self-awareness. Ask them to copy and complete the following statements for themselves:

- *I am good at ...*
- *The things that are important to me are ...*
- *I feel confident when ...*
- *I feel stressed when ...*
- *Three new things I would like to try are ...*

Students then give their list to someone who knows them well to see if they agree or disagree with their list, and if they would add anything.