

Lesson Plan: You're the Captain of Your Ship!

Materials Needed:

- Whiteboard, chalkboard, or large sheet of paper
 - Markers or chalk
 - A small toy boat or car (optional visual aid)
 - A few index cards or small slips of paper
 - A jar or hat to hold the paper slips ("The Problem Jar")
 - Building materials (e.g., LEGOs, building blocks, pipe cleaners, cardboard, tape)
 - Worksheet: "My Captain's Plan" (one for each learner)
 - Pencils or pens
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Learning Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- **(Ages 10-12):** Define "agency" in your own words and explain the difference between being proactive (a captain) and reactive (a passenger).
 - **(Ages 6-9):** Explain that you have the power to make your own choices and be a "doer."
 - **(All Ages):** Identify examples of high and low agency in a story or scenario.
 - **(All Ages):** Create a simple plan to use your own "agency power" to work toward a goal.
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I. Introduction (5-10 minutes)

Hook: The Captain and The Passenger

Educator: "Imagine your life is like a boat sailing on the ocean. (*Hold up the toy boat, if you have one*). Now, on a boat, there are two ways to travel. You can be the **Captain**, standing at the wheel, looking at the map, and steering the boat exactly where you want it to go. Or, you can be a **Passenger**, just sitting in a chair, letting the waves and the wind push the boat wherever they want. Which one sounds more fun? Which one sounds more powerful?"

(Allow for discussion. Guide them to see that being the captain is about being in control.)

Lesson Goal

Educator: "Today, we're going to learn about a real-life superpower called **agency**. It's the special power you have to be the captain of your own ship—to make choices and make things happen, instead of just letting things happen to you. By the end, you'll know exactly how to be the captain of your own day!"

II. Body (20-25 minutes)

Part 1: What is Agency? (I Do)

Educator: "That big word, **agency**, is just a fancy way of saying you can take charge. Let's look at what that means."

(On the whiteboard, create two columns: "Captain (High Agency)" and "Passenger (Low Agency)").

Educator: "A person with high agency is a **Captain**. They are proactive. That means they think ahead and act. If a Captain sees a problem, they say, 'I'll figure it out!' and they try to find a solution."

- **For the 11-year-old (Vienna):** "A Captain has an 'internal locus of control,' which means they believe **they** are in charge of their success. They don't wait for luck."
- **For the 7-year-old:** "A Captain is a 'doer.' If they're bored, they don't just whine. They think of a game to play or a picture to draw."

Educator: "A person with low agency is more like a **Passenger**. They are reactive. That means they wait for things to happen to them. If a Passenger sees a problem, they might say, 'Oh well, I can't do anything about it,' and wait for someone else to fix it."

- **For the 11-year-old (Vienna):** "A Passenger has an 'external locus of control.' They might blame luck or other people when things go wrong, feeling like they have no power."
- **For the 7-year-old:** "A Passenger is a 'waiter.' If their toy breaks, they might just cry and wait for a grown-up, instead of seeing if they can fix it first."

Part 2: Spotting Agency in Action (We Do)

Educator: "Let's practice spotting the difference. I'm going to pull some everyday problems from our 'Problem Jar.' For each one, let's brainstorm: What would a Passenger do? And what would a Captain do?"

(Prepare these on slips of paper beforehand and place them in the jar).

Scenario 1 (For the 7-year-old): "You want to build a LEGO castle, but your little sibling keeps knocking it over."

- **Passenger response might be:** Get mad, give up, and yell for a grown-up.
- **Captain response might be:** Say, "Hey, let's build together!" or find a different spot to build, or build a wall around the castle first.

Scenario 2 (For the 11-year-old): "You have a big school project on ancient Egypt due in two weeks."

- **Passenger response might be:** Forget about it until the night before it's due and then panic.
- **Captain response might be:** Break it into small pieces. Decide to spend 20 minutes today just researching pyramids and make a simple plan for the week.

Scenario 3 (For both): "You're trying to learn a new skill, like riding a bike or drawing a horse, and it's really hard."

- **Passenger response might be:** "I'm just not good at this! I quit."
- **Captain response might be:** "This is tricky. Maybe I can watch a video to get tips, or ask for help with one part, or just practice the first step over and over."

Part 3: Be a Captain! (You Do)

Educator: "Now it's your turn to practice being a Captain. We have two missions to choose from. You can do one, or both!"

Mission A: The Invention Challenge (Hands-On)

- **The Goal:** "Using these building materials, invent something that solves a small problem. It could be a stand for a tablet, a tool to grab something that fell behind the sofa, or a neat organizer for your pens."
- **The Captain's Job:** "Before you start, tell me your plan. What is your goal? What is your very first step? As you build, if something doesn't work, don't be a Passenger and give up! Be a Captain and say, 'Hmm, how can I figure this out?'"

Mission B: Your Captain's Plan (Planning/Writing)

- **The Goal:** "Think of one thing you want to achieve. It can be big or small. Maybe you want to learn to bake cookies, finish a chapter book, or keep your room clean for a whole week."
- **The Captain's Job:** "Fill out this 'My Captain's Plan' worksheet. You'll write down your goal, the very first small step you can take, and what you'll do if you face a challenge."
 - **For the 7-year-old:** They can draw their goal and you can help them write the words.
 - **For the 11-year-old (Vienna):** Encourage her to be specific with her steps and her plan for overcoming obstacles.

III. Conclusion (5 minutes)

Show and Tell Recap

Educator: "Captains, report back! Let's see your inventions or hear about your plans."

(Have each learner share what they made or planned.)

Educator: "When you were building or planning, what was one moment you had to be a Captain and not a Passenger? How did you 'figure it out'?"

Final Takeaway

Educator: "So, what is that superpower called again? (*Agency!*) And what does it mean? (*It means being the boss of your choices, being a doer, being the captain!*) Remember, life will always have waves, but you have agency. You have the power to steer your own ship. You don't have to wait for things to happen—you can make them happen."

Assessment & Success Criteria

- **Formative (during lesson):** Listen to their responses during the "Problem Jar" activity. Can they correctly identify Captain vs. Passenger behaviors?
- **Summative (end of lesson):** Review their completed "My Captain's Plan" worksheet or their explanation of their invention process. Success is when they can articulate a goal, a first step, and

a potential solution to a problem, demonstrating they understand the core concept of taking initiative.

Differentiation and Extensions

- **For Extra Support:** Provide more concrete examples. Use a picture book where the main character shows high agency (like *The Most Magnificent Thing* by Ashley Spires) and pause to discuss the character's "Captain" moments.
- **For an Extra Challenge (Vienna):** Discuss a time a "Passenger" attitude might actually be okay (e.g., relaxing and watching a movie). Talk about the balance. Challenge her to find an example of a historical figure who showed high agency and explain how.

Worksheet: My Captain's Plan

Name: _____

My Ship's Destination (My Goal):

(You can draw it here!)

Leaving the Dock (My First Small Step):

Stormy Weather Plan (If I get stuck or it's hard, I will...):
