

Helping Children Feel Safe Not Knowing

A World Happiness Day Classroom Experience (Pre-K-2)

Educator Overview

On World Happiness Day, we often talk about joy. But learning doesn't always feel certain. And in those moments, joy can feel far away.

This short activity helps children understand something simple and powerful: Not knowing something yet is part of growing.

Time: ~10 minutes

Includes: Story read-aloud, discussion, reflection

Today's Big Idea

Not knowing doesn't mean you aren't smart.

It means your brain is growing.

Optional Read-Aloud Tips

If helpful, you might:

- Pause after the opening lines and invite a quick example.
- Slow slightly on the word "present."
- Allow a quiet moment after the lines about feeling down.
- Invite one or two volunteers to share at the end.

Use what fits your style and your students.

Read-Aloud Text

From *It's Okay Not to Know* by Brenda Do (brendado.com)

When you don't know something...
Or you make a mistake...
It's easy to feel down.
But not knowing and having uh-oh's are good...
When you turn things around.
Not knowing gives you a chance to learn something new.
Like "What's the answer to $6+2$?"
Or "How does it feel to hug an emu?"
It's ok not to know or have an uh-oh.
Because not knowing is like getting a present.
You get a chance to learn what is and what isn't.
Then you can find out more by asking why.
And learn cool things like how clouds get so high up in the sky.
It's ok not to know or have an uh-oh.
Because an uh-oh is like getting a present.
You get a chance to learn what is and what isn't.
Maybe you discover what makes things fall...
Or what makes things do nothing at all.
Then when you see someone who doesn't know...
Or someone who has an uh-oh...
And they're feeling down...
You can help them turn things around.
You can show them how not knowing is a present.
Because now they get to learn what is and what isn't.
Maybe together, you can discover fun, new things...
Like how high you can swing on the swings.

Grade-Level Adaptation

Pre-K / TK

- Keep discussion brief (1–2 questions).
- Focus on feelings in the body (“How does it feel when you don’t know?”).
- Pre-K: Draw your “uh-oh” moment instead of writing.
- Model the phrase: “I’m still learning.”

Kindergarten–1st

- Invite simple examples from reading, math, or play.
- Emphasize the “present” metaphor.
- Encourage students to share one strategy they can try next time.

2nd Grade

- Ask students to explain why mistakes help the brain grow.
- Invite peer mentoring: “How can we help someone who feels stuck?”
- Encourage 1–2 written sentences in reflection.

Discussion (4–5 Minutes)

Choose 2–3 questions based on age and time.

Preschool

- How does your body feel when you don’t know something?
- What can you say when something feels tricky?
- How can we help a friend who has an “uh-oh”?
- Why might not knowing be like getting a present?

K–2

- When do you feel unsure at school?
- Why might not knowing be like getting a present?
- How can you help someone who feels stuck?
- What does a present make you feel? How is that similar to learning something new?

Optional inclusion moment

After reflection, invite students to raise their hands if they are still learning something.

Then say: “Look around. We’re all still learning.”

From “Uh-Oh” to growth

It’s okay not to know... yet.

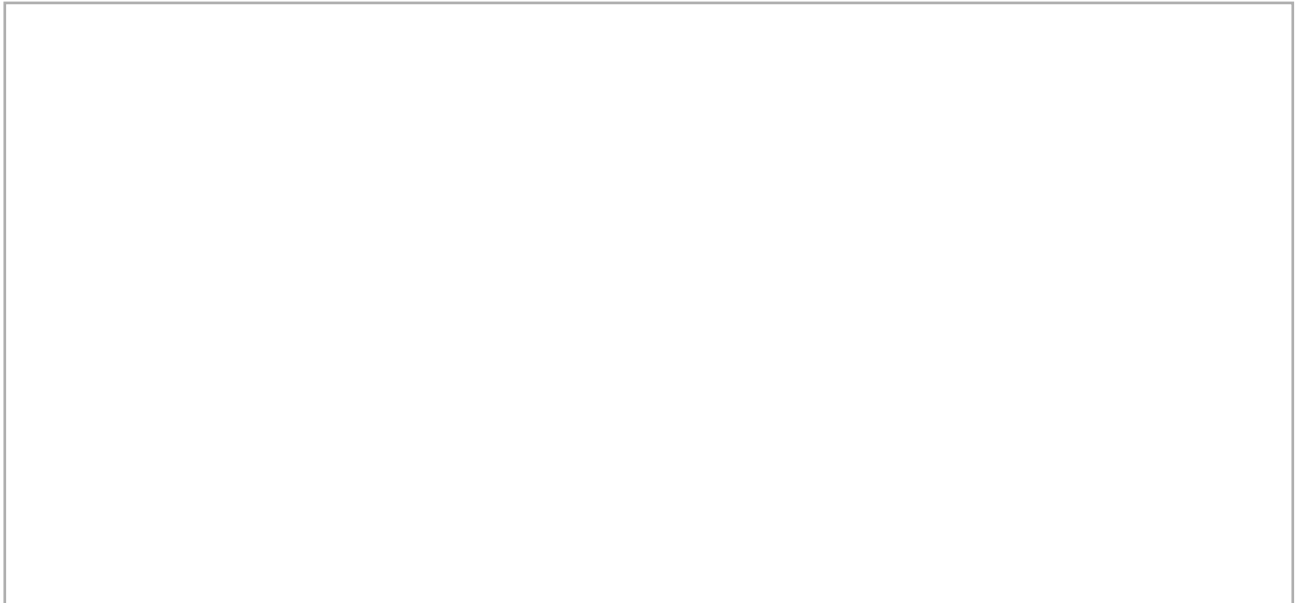
My uh-oh moment

Something that felt tricky at first or an accident that happened



What I learned

After trying again, asking for help, or practicing, I learned:



When I don't know something yet, I can...

- Ask for help
- Try again
- Take a breath
- Practice some more
- Say, "I'm still learning."

One more step

Today, I will try again with:

We are all still learning something.

