



Middle School
School Curriculum

**SOCIAL,
EMOTIONAL
& ETHICAL
LEARNING**

Educating the Heart and Mind

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SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL & ETHICAL LEARNING

Educating the Heart and Mind



Center for
Contemplative Science and
Compassion-Based Ethics



EMORY
UNIVERSITY

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For more information, please visit compassion.emory.edu

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Introduction and Acknowledgments

Welcome to the SEE Learning curriculum for middle school grades. This curriculum is designed to be used with the Social, Emotional, and Ethical Learning program (SEE Learning), which was developed by the Center for Contemplative Science and Compassion-Based Ethics at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A.

Apart from developmental considerations, the middle school curriculum has many similarities to the elementary school curricula, and follows the same scope and sequence. This is because each version of the curriculum is designed to be the first engagement that students will have with SEE Learning. This means students do not need to have progressed through either elementary curriculum before beginning this one. If you have students who have already completed the elementary curriculum, you may wish to adapt the learning experiences you use from this curriculum so as to build on prior knowledge and avoid repetition of scenarios. A middle school curriculum for students who have already completed the elementary curriculum is planned as a future development.

Before implementing the SEE Learning curriculum, it is highly recommended that schools and educators first register with Emory University or one of its affiliates, and participate in the online “SEE 101: Orientation” course or the in-person version. Also, as you work your way through this curriculum, you are encouraged to participate in the worldwide SEE Learning community using the online SEE Learning Portal to share your experiences, learn from others, and engage in the ongoing professional development opportunities designed to help both you and your students.

In addition, educators are encouraged to read the SEE Learning Companion, which explains the overarching objectives, rationale, and framework of the program, and particularly the chapter on implementation, which has useful practical information on how best to use this curriculum. The curriculum is based directly on the SEE Learning framework found in that volume, which was largely inspired by the work of the Dalai Lama, as well as other thought leaders and education specialists. It provides a comprehensive approach for complementing Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) with the cultivation of basic human values, systems thinking, attention and resilience skills, and other important educational practices.

Over six hundred educators have participated in the SEE Learning program from 2016-2019. They have attended foundational workshops, engaged their classes in the SEE curriculum learning experiences, been visited and observed by members of the core SEE Learning team, and contributed their feedback and suggestions.

This curriculum was prepared under the supervision of Linda Lantieri, Senior Program Advisor for SEE Learning, Brendan Ozawa-de Silva, Associate Director for SEE Learning, and Lindy Settevendemie, Project Coordinator for SEE Learning. In addition, other chief curriculum writers include Ann McKay Bryson, Jennifer Knox, Emily Orr, Kelly Richards, and Christa Tinari. Numerous other educators and curriculum writers contributed in valuable ways to earlier versions of the curriculum, and nearly a hundred educators provided important feedback on individual learning experiences. As with all aspects of the SEE Learning program, the process was also overseen by Dr. Lobsang Tenzin Negi, Director of Emory University's Center for Contemplative Science and Compassion-Based Ethics.

Scope and Sequence

The SEE Learning curriculum consists of seven chapters (or units) and a final capstone project. Each chapter begins with an introduction that outlines the major content of the chapter, followed by three to seven learning experiences (or lessons). Each learning experience is designed to take from 20 to 40 minutes. The suggested time is considered the minimum time it would take to complete that learning experience and its components. However, learning experiences can always be expanded on a given day, or spread out over one or more days, for deeper and more graduated learning as time permits. Also, most learning experiences can readily be divided into two sections when time does not allow for an entire learning experience to be completed in one session.

Each learning experience has up to five parts. These are:

1. Check-In
2. Presentation / Discussion
3. Insight Activity
4. Reflective Practice
5. Debrief

The five parts of the SEE Learning experience correspond to SEE Learning's pedagogical model, which goes from received knowledge to critical insight to embodied understanding. In general, the Check-in provides the opportunity to ground oneself, in preparation for focusing on learning; the Presentation/Discussion section supports conveying received knowledge; the Insight Activity is aimed at sparking critical thoughts and insights; the Reflective Practice allows for deeper personal reflection that can lead to embodied understanding; and the Debrief guides learners in making thoughtful connections that anchor the learning. These are explained in greater detail in the introduction to Chapter 1 of the curriculum.

Care has been taken in designing the sequence of the chapters and learning experiences so that they gradually build on and reinforce one other, so we recommend that you do them in the order presented. Research has shown that educational programs like SEE Learning work best when they are implemented in a way that follows four principles, known by the acronym SAFE.¹ These are:

- **Sequenced:** Connected and coordinated activities to foster skills development.
- **Active:** Active forms of learning to help students master new skills and attitudes.
- **Focused:** A component that emphasizes developing personal and social skills.
- **Explicit:** Targeting specific social and emotional skills.

Facilitating individual chapters or learning experiences out of sequence can lead to confusion among your students. For example, many ideas introduced early in the curriculum (such as interdependence or using resilience skills to calm the nervous system) are then built upon later in the curriculum (such as when recalling interdependence to understand systems, or thinking back on what was learned about the nervous system to understand emotions). Since SEE Learning is a resilience and trauma-informed program, and resilience skills are taught to students in Chapter 2, skipping this chapter would result in a program that is no longer informed by best practices in this area. Providing your students with this journey of experiences one stepping stone at a time will help ensure that they have the foundational knowledge and skills to move with confidence and understanding through each subsequent section, leading to a sense of agency and ownership of the core ideas over time.

Chapter 1: Creating a Compassionate Classroom

This chapter previews how systems thinking, compassion, and critical thinking are built into each chapter. At its core, SEE Learning is about students understanding how best to take care of themselves and each other, specifically with regard to what can be termed their social and emotional health and well-being. Therefore, all of SEE Learning can be seen as rooted in compassion: compassion for oneself (self-compassion) and compassion for others. One cannot, of course, simply tell students to be compassionate to others and to themselves; what is necessary is exploring the value of this mindset, experiencing a range of methods and providing a set of tools. As students come to understand the value of these tools and methods, they will begin to employ them for themselves. At that point, they become their own and one another's teachers.

¹ Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). <https://casel.org/what-is-sel/approaches/>

Chapter 2: Building Resilience

Chapter 2 explores the important role that our bodies, and in particular our nervous systems, play in our happiness and well-being.

In modern life, our bodies sometimes react to danger when there is no real threat to our survival, or hold on to a sense of danger after a threat has passed. This can lead to a dysregulation of the nervous system, in turn damaging students' ability to concentrate and learn, and can even compromise their physical health. Fortunately, students can learn to calm their bodies and minds and regulate their nervous systems. This chapter introduces students to resilience skills to enhance this type of self-care.

Many of these skills were developed through trauma and resilience work and they are based on a significant body of clinical and scientific research. It is possible that while exploring sensations of the body with your students, some of them will have difficult experiences that you may not be able to deal with sufficiently on your own, especially if they have suffered or are suffering from trauma. "Help Now! Strategies" can be suggested to the child in the immediate aftermath of an unexpected reaction. If you have counselors or school psychologists, or a wise administrator or colleague, we encourage you to seek assistance and further counsel as necessary. However, the approach taken in SEE Learning is a resilience-based approach that focuses on the strengths of individual students, not on treating trauma. These are general wellness skills that can be beneficial to anyone, regardless of their level of experience of trauma. Students will be well positioned to explore the next elements of SEE Learning, cultivating attention and developing emotional awareness, when they have more of an ability to regulate their nervous systems.

Chapter 3: Strengthening Attention and Self-Awareness

In addition to "body literacy" and awareness of the nervous system, self-compassion and compassion for others are supported by "emotional literacy" and an understanding of how our minds work. For this, we need to be able to observe our minds and our experiences carefully and with close attention. This is the topic of Chapter 3, "Strengthening Attention and Self-Awareness."

Attention training has numerous other benefits for students as well. It facilitates concentration, learning, and the retention of information. It allows one to better control one's impulses. It calms the body and mind in ways that promote physical and psychological health. And while often told to "Pay attention!", students have rarely been taught the methods by which they can train and cultivate stronger attention skills. In SEE Learning, attention is not cultivated through force of will, but by repeatedly and respectfully cultivating opportunities for practice, just like any other skill.

Students generally do not have trouble paying close attention to things they find interesting. The problem is paying attention when things are less stimulating or when there are distractions. Chapter 3 takes a multi-pronged approach to attention training. First, it introduces the idea of attention training and its potential benefits. Second, it shows students that when we pay attention to things, we may find them more interesting than we initially thought. Third, it introduces attention exercises that are engaging and accessible. Lastly, it introduces attention training with objects of attention that are more neutral and less stimulating, like the simple act of walking or paying attention to one's breath. Throughout, students are invited to notice what happens to their minds and bodies when they are able to pay attention with calmness, stability, and clarity.

Chapter 4: Navigating Emotions

Adolescents are at a highly suitable developmental stage to engage in a deep exploration of emotions. This chapter explores emotions both directly and through mental models, so that students can develop what can be called a "map of the mind," meaning an understanding of different mental states, such as emotions, and their characteristics. This map of the mind is a kind of emotional literacy, contributing to emotional intelligence and helping students to better navigate their own emotional lives. Students explore emotion timelines: the sequence of the processes of emotion generation, emotion regulation, and behavior. They also explore emotion families and how to develop strategies for dealing with "risky emotions": those which can lead to problems for oneself and others if left unchecked. Through this, students can become better equipped to exercise restraint from behaviors that harm themselves and others, a key aspect of ethical intelligence. This can further lead to appreciating the value of cultivating good "emotional hygiene," which does not mean suppressing emotions, but rather dealing with them in a healthy way.

Chapter 5: Learning About and From One Another

With this chapter, the curriculum turns from the Personal to the Social domain, and the learning experiences here seek to help students turn their attention towards others. Changes in brain development mean that students in adolescence become increasingly oriented towards their peers, and gain much more developed capacities for perspective-taking and empathy. Far more than at any previous time in life, their identity comes to be formed relationally with peers, and not just with family members. This chapter therefore focuses on understanding others' emotions in context, perspective-taking, and empathy. It also introduces the practice of mindful listening and mindful dialogues, useful tools that you can use to explore many topics with your students. The underlying theme of the chapter is empathy: the ability to understand and resonate with another's situation and emotional state.

Chapter 6: Compassion for Self and Others

This chapter focuses on how students can learn to be more kind to each other and to themselves. In adolescence, as students begin to compare themselves more with their peers, and form their social identities through peer relationships, they also come to face fears of social rejection and social isolation. A high number of students at this age struggle with anxiety, and self-esteem and self-worth issues. The expectations of society compound this and can be internalized in unhealthy ways. It is therefore an especially important time to introduce the practices of self-compassion and compassion towards others.

Principally this involves helping students increase their awareness of their own emotional lives and those of others. When students are able to understand others' emotions and behaviors in context, they will be better able to empathize with others. This in turn can lead to feeling more connected with others, and thus less isolated and lonely. Dr. Thupten Jinpa, a noted scholar on compassion, defines compassion as "a sense of concern that arises when we are confronted with another person's suffering and feel motivated to see that suffering relieved."² Compassion therefore depends on awareness of the other's situation and an ability to empathize with them, combined with a sense of caring towards that person. These qualities are also important for self-compassion. Psychologist Dr. Kristin Neff, one of the world's leading experts on the topic, writes that self-compassion means being "kind and understanding when confronted with one's personal failings."³

Chapter 7: We're All In This Together

Chapter 7 of the curriculum focuses on systems and systems thinking. These are not entirely new topics, since they have been introduced throughout the curriculum. In Chapter 1, students drew an interdependence web, showing how many things are connected to a single item or event. In Chapters 3 and 4, they explored how emotions arise from causes and within a context, and that a spark can turn into a forest fire, affecting everything around it. Systems thinking is built into the entire curriculum, but in this chapter it is approached directly and explicitly.

SEE Learning defines systems thinking as: "The ability to understand how persons, objects, and events exist interdependently with other persons, objects, and events in complex networks of causality." Adolescents are at a perfect age to engage deeply in systems thinking, since their development places them at a time when they are often seeking ways to understand themselves in relation to others. This chapter re-introduces the concept of interdependence and then introduces

² Jinpa, Thupten. *A Fearless Heart: How the courage to be compassionate can transform our lives* (Avery, 2016), xx.

³ <https://self-compassion.org/the-three-elements-of-self-compassion-2/>

simple ways to engage in systems thinking, including feedback loops. It then presents the iceberg metaphor as a way of looking at events not as isolated occurrences, but as manifestations of deeper structures.

SEE Learning Capstone Project: Building a Better World

The SEE Learning Capstone Project is a culminating action activity for your students. Students reflect on what it would be like if their entire school were a school of kindness and self-compassion, engaged in the practices of SEE Learning. After imagining what that would look like, they compare their vision to what is actually happening at their school. They then choose a single area to focus on and determine a set of individual and collective actions. After engaging in these actions, they reflect on their experiences and share their knowledge with others.

The Capstone Project is divided into eight steps, each of which will take a minimum of one session to complete. This curriculum serves as a full school year's worth of content. As you plan for doing the entire curriculum and ending with the Capstone Project, it is recommended that you build in at least eight, and ideally 10-12, sessions for the completion of this collaborative project.

Adaptations

Educators are the best judges of what's needed in their classrooms and schools. As such, you should feel free to change the names of characters in the stories and other specific details in the learning experiences to better align with the context of your group. If you are considering making more significant changes, we encourage you to first look carefully at the objectives for that learning experience, and to consider discussing the changes with a colleague to ensure that they do not unintentionally alter the intent, impact, or safety of the learning experience.

Abbreviated Version

If you cannot implement the entire SEE Learning curriculum, we recommend doing the following abbreviated version, which cuts the number of learning experiences from 39 to 21 and omits the final project. It still includes critical elements from all chapters and progresses in a logical order so that later skills are being built upon a proper foundation. If the entire abbreviated version cannot be done, simply progress as far along it as time allows. If you find you have more time, add in some of the learning experiences that are not included in the abbreviated version.

Chapter 1: LE 1, LE 5, LE 6

Chapter 2: LE 1, LE 2, LE 4, LE 5

Chapter 3: LE 1, LE 2, LE 4

Chapter 4: LE 1, LE 2, LE 4

Chapter 5: LE 2, LE 4

Chapter 6: LE 1, LE 2, LE 4

Chapter 7: LE 1, LE 2, LE 3

Effectively Implementing SEE Learning

The effective implementation of any SEL program plays a crucial role in influencing the outcomes and benefits for students.⁴ Implementation refers to the ways a program is put into practice. It draws a picture of how to facilitate the program and is an essential component of intervention effectiveness.⁵ High quality implementation of evidence-based SEL programming in schools is essential to achieve the specific outcomes targeted through the SEL program.

When implementing SEE Learning, it is critical to recognize the importance of completing all lessons and activities in the program (dosage) in the way it was designed by the program developers (fidelity), in order to maximize the likelihood of success in your own classroom environment. To achieve high quality implementation, be sure that the curriculum is facilitated through the established and theory-driven guidelines of the SEE Learning framework.

Research shows us that ongoing monitoring and supporting of the implementation process is vital. In their meta-analysis, Durlak and colleagues⁶ found that the positive effects of Social and Emotional Learning interventions on academic gains, reductions in depression and anxiety, and reductions in conduct problems were approximately twice as large when implemented with full fidelity to design and dosage.

Although the importance of implementing the program and its individual components fully and as described and intended in the curriculum is widely accepted, contextualizing program implementation is fairly common in educational settings. For example, teachers may choose to adapt their facilitation of the curriculum to match their teaching style, or to address specific student interests and needs in their classroom. At times full implementation is impossible due to time constraints, but note that altering the intended implementation can compromise the fullness of the curriculum's effectiveness.

⁴ The SEE Learning program is indebted to Prof. Kimberly Schonert-Reichl for contributing this and the following section to this introduction.

⁵ Durlak, J. A. (2016). "Programme implementation in social and emotional learning: basic issues and research findings." *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 46, 333-345.

⁶ Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). "The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: a meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions." *Child Development*, 82, 405-32.

Key concepts related to establishing high implementation quality include:

- **Fidelity:** the degree to which the major elements of the curriculum are delivered as designed.
- **Dosage:** how much of the program is delivered (how many lessons, and how completely)
- **Quality of Delivery:** how completely the implementation is conducted, and the extent of facilitator training and support.
- **Adaptation:** any ways in which the program was altered or adapted
- **Participant Engagement:** the degree to which students engaged in the activities⁷

Effectively Implementing SEE Learning

The SEE Learning framework builds on the innovative work done in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and other educational initiatives that seek to introduce holistic education into schools. Social and emotional learning, or SEL, involves the processes through which students and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage their emotions, feel and show empathy for others, establish and achieve positive goals, develop and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions, so that we can handle ourselves, our relationships, and our work effectively and ethically.⁸

SEL competencies are viewed as “mastery skills” underlying virtually all aspects of human functioning. Moreover, SEL offers educators, students, families, and communities relevant strategies and practices to better prepare for “the tests of life, not a life of tests.”⁹ SEL competencies comprise the foundational skills for positive health practices, engaged citizenship, and academic and social success in school and beyond. SEL is sometimes called “the missing piece,” because it represents a part of education that is inextricably linked to school success, that may not have been explicitly stated or given much attention until recently. SEL emphasizes active learning approaches in which skills can be generalized across curriculum areas and contexts when opportunities are provided to practice the skills that foster positive attitudes, behaviors, and thinking processes. The good

⁷ Durlak, J. A., & DuPre, E. P. (2008). “Implementation matters: A review of research on the influence of implementation on program outcomes and the factors affecting implementation.” *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 41, 327–350;

Durlak, J. A. (2016). “Programme implementation in social and emotional learning: basic issues and research findings.” *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 46, 333-345.

⁸ Weissberg, R. P., Durlak, J. A., Domitrovich, C. E., & Gullotta, T. P. (2015). Social and emotional learning: Past, present, and future. In J. A. Durlak, C. E. Domitrovich, R. P. Weissberg, & T. P. Gullotta (Eds.), *Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning: Research and practice* (pp. 3–19). New York, NY: Guilford.

⁹ Elias, M. J. (2001). Prepare children for the tests of life, not a life of tests. *Education Week*, 21(4), 40.

news is that SEL skills can be learned through intentionally providing nurturing and caring learning environments and experiences.¹⁰

A Note about “Mindfulness”

The term “mindfulness” has become very popular over the past decade and is now applied to a variety of strategies and practices, some of them quite distinct from historical origins. One of the most popular current definitions of mindfulness describes it as a type of non-judgmental awareness of the present moment. Many have argued over whether mindfulness is a spiritual practice, a secular one, or both; or whether it necessarily involves meditation or can be cultivated without meditation. While some may question the universality of the term “mindfulness,” there is no question about the universality of attention.

In SEE Learning, “mindfulness” therefore refers to keeping in mind something that is helpful. It is similar to the idea of retention, or not forgetting. For example, if one needs to remember one’s keys, it is mindfulness that helps one do so; if one forgets one’s keys, it is because one had a lapse of mindfulness. What is most important here is that students will develop an understanding that one can also be mindful of one’s values and commitments. Indeed, this is vital to developing ethical literacy. Mindfulness is one of the key elements that helps us stay true to our values and act accordingly, whereas “forgetting ourselves” is a common cause of acting out of alignment with our values.

SEE Learning also retains the term “mindfulness” in describing well-known practices such as “mindful listening,” “mindful walking,” etc., because they are common conventions. If your school prefers, however, you can substitute other terms such as “active or attentive listening,” “attentive eating,” or “attentive walking.” Whichever term you find best for your situation, what is important is that students come to understand the value of cultivating attention and using that attention to develop discernment with regard to their internal and external situations.

¹⁰ Greenberg, M. T. (2010). School-based prevention: Current status and future challenges. *Effective Education*, 2, 27–52.

Thank You

We thank you for your interest in SEE Learning. We hope it provides a useful resource for you and your students, and hope that you will share your experiences and insights with the SEE Learning community in your region and worldwide.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1

Creating a Compassionate Classroom



Overview

At its core, SEE Learning is about students learning how best to take care of themselves and each other, specifically with regard to what can be termed their emotional and social health. Therefore, all of SEE Learning can be seen as rooted in compassion: compassion for oneself (self-compassion) and compassion for others. It is not enough, however, to tell students to be compassionate to others and to themselves; what is necessary is showing a range of methods and providing a set of tools. As students come to understand the value of these tools and methods, they will begin to employ them for themselves. At that point, they become their own and each others' teachers.

For this reason, Chapter 1, "Creating a Compassionate Classroom," introduces the foundational concepts of kindness and compassion. "Kindness" is the term employed for younger students, whereas "compassion" is employed for older students. Although there may be subtle differences between these terms, for the purpose of SEE Learning, the important thing is to introduce these concepts and explore them with your students so that they eventually develop their own rich understanding of the concepts and what they look like in practice. All the subsequent chapters of SEE Learning then build upon this foundation by exploring self-compassion in the personal domain with regard to the body, the mind, and emotions (Chapters 2 to 4); compassion for others (Chapters 5 and 6); and compassion in a systemic context (Chapter 7). In some ways, therefore, this first chapter begins to introduce the "what" of SEE Learning and the remaining chapters fill out the "how."

Learning experience 1, "Exploring Compassion," introduces the concept of compassion, explores what it means, and investigates why we need it. It also explores the relationship between compassion and happiness by using two activities: a step in/step out activity and a drawing of a moment of kindness. It is important for students to explore the connection between kindness and happiness, which is the topic of learning experience 2, "Exploring Happiness". If students begin to recognize that our universal wish to be treated with kindness by others (rather than with cruelty) is rooted in our wish for well-being and happiness, then they can recognize that this tends to hold true for others also. Therefore if we want to be treated with kindness, it only makes sense for us to also treat others with kindness. This is the principle of reciprocity.

Learning experience 3, "Class Agreements," provides an opportunity for students to create a list of class agreements that they will strive to abide by in order to create a safe and kind classroom for all. The creation of agreements by students helps them explore kindness in a direct way that shows the clear implications of our need for kindness within the context of a shared space with others.

Learning experience 4, "Practicing Kindness & Compassion," returns to the classroom agreements with an intention to make the classroom agreements more concrete in the minds of your students. First, the students engage in an insight activity whereby they translate the class agreements into

practical examples that can be acted out. Then they act out those examples in front of each other and reflect on what they experienced. This process of embodied understanding should continue as the school year goes on and will make it easier to refer to the class agreements concretely throughout the year.

Learning experience 5, “Compassion as an Inner Quality,” aims to deepen students’ understanding of kindness through a few stories that are then discussed. We easily associate kindness with external activities, like giving someone food or money, saying sweet words to someone, or helping someone up when they fall. But if the intention behind those actions and words is to take advantage of the other person, then we do not see that as real or genuine kindness; nor do we see it as genuine help. The aim of SEE Learning is not to tell students what to do externally or to get them to behave “appropriately;” rather, it aims at helping students develop genuine internal motivation to seek the best in themselves and the best for others. Therefore, it is important that students gradually learn the importance of inner qualities and not just external behaviors. For this reason, it is important that students gradually learn that kindness goes deeper than just external actions but also refers to a state of mind and heart: one’s intention to bring help and happiness to another person. Based on this understanding, students then develop their own definition of compassion, which they can later add to and amend as their understanding develops in sophistication.

The chapter concludes with learning experience 6, “Recognizing Compassion and Exploring Interdependence,” which involves a further exploration of compassion, this time incorporating the idea of interdependence, which overlaps with the concept of gratitude, which will be explored in greater detail later in the curriculum. The idea here is that although we are surrounded by acts of kindness every day, we often do not recognize these acts of kindness or we take them for granted. By looking deeper at everyday activities and seeing the various ways kindness is involved, students can practice appreciating kindness as a skill that grows over time. Eventually they will be able to see more acts of kindness around them and they will get better at recognizing and appreciating their own acts of kindness. Practicing the skill of recognizing compassion in its various forms can lead to a deeper appreciation for how essential kindness is to our everyday life, our happiness, and even our very survival. In this learning experience, students will also be introduced to the concept of interdependence and how their own accomplishments and objects around them are made possible through the kind acts of others, setting the stage for a deeper exploration of interdependence and gratitude later in the curriculum.

It happens that some students find it difficult to recognize kindness in themselves and others. Acts that appear to us as kind, such as someone holding the door open for another person (or even the act of teaching!), may not appear as kind acts to some of your students. Be patient and allow your students to explore these concepts gradually. Hearing other students express what they see as kind

can be helpful, as can having some students share kind acts that they noticed that were done by fellow students. It may take time, but it is likely that over time you will see perspectives slowly shift towards a greater ability to recognize kindness in its many forms.

The Components of a SEE Learning Experience

You will notice that each learning experience begins with a check-in, and that these check-ins change and develop over time. The check-ins provide a way of transitioning into the SEE Learning experience and signaling a shift in the day, but they are also a way to strengthen skills through repeated practice. You are welcome and encouraged to use the check-ins at other times, even when you do not have enough time to do a full learning experience.

Some learning experiences involve discussions or presentations that give students a basic knowledge of a term or idea. This is for the purpose of received knowledge. The learning experiences also include insight activities, which are designed to be short activities that can move received knowledge into the realm of critical insights, personal “a-ha” moments when a student realizes something for themselves. Whenever possible, received knowledge is incorporated into the insight activities (rather than as a separate presentation) so that students can learn by doing.

In addition, learning experiences include reflective practices. These are for moving from critical insight into embodied understanding; they are for deepening the experience. In some cases there is not a sharp distinction between insight activities and reflective practices, because a reflective practice can lead to insights, and an insight activity can be repeated and deepened to encourage further reflection and internalization. Both insight and activities are sometimes marked with an asterisk. This symbol indicates that you are encouraged to do that particular activity more than once if you feel it would be helpful.

Finally, each lesson ends with a debrief, which is an opportunity for students to reflect on the learning experience as a whole and share their thoughts, feelings, and questions.

Time and Pacing

Each learning experience is designed to be a minimum of 30 minutes. It is recommended that you take longer than this if time allows and if your students are capable of it, spending more time on the activities and reflective practices especially. If you have less than 30 minutes, you can choose to only do one of the activities or a part of the activity, and finish the learning experience in the following session. However, remember that check-ins and insight activities are important to include regardless of time.

Setting Up a Peace Corner

You may wish to set up a peace corner, where students can go when they are upset or need some time to themselves. This will also serve as a good place to post artifacts created by your students,

including charts and artwork that they create and posters or other materials that are supportive of SEE Learning. Some classrooms have pillows, a stuffed animal, special pictures, a poster of the resiliency zone (explained in Chapter 2), snow globes and hourglasses, music, story books, and other such resources. Explain to your class that the peace corner is a place where they can show kindness and compassion to themselves and practice some of the things they are learning in SEE Learning. Over time, just going to the peace corner may prove helpful for your students when they need to settle themselves or return to a place of well-being in their bodies, as they come to associate the peace corner with safety and well-being.

Student Personal Practice

Your students will be learning personal practices that they can use and each student will connect with a different set of practices. SEE Learning scales up into practices gradually, recognizing that if not approached skillfully, some practices may actually make students feel worse, rather than better. Chapter 1 sets the stage for personal practice by establishing a safe and caring environment. Chapter 2 then introduces practices that calm and regulate the nervous system. Chapter 3 then introduces practices involving the cultivation of attention (and what are commonly called “mindfulness” practices). Chapter 4 then introduces practices involving emotions. It is advised that you follow this sequence as best as you are able, as that way your students will be well prepared for each additional type of practice and will be able to return to the simpler forms of practice in case they become upset or dysregulated. Students will also start a journal they can use throughout the curriculum for drawings and written exercises.

Teacher Personal Practice

It is highly recommended that you begin some of the practices in Chapters 2 and 3 before you start teaching them to your students if you do not already have familiarity with them. Even a slight bit of personal practice (such as a few minutes each day) will make your teaching more effective when you reach those sections. Starting early will allow you to get in as much practice as you are able before working on the practices with your students.

Further Reading and Resources

If you have not yet completed reading the SEE Learning Framework, contained within the *SEE Learning Companion*, you are encouraged to read that up to and through the Personal Domain.

Also recommended is Daniel Goleman and Peter Senge’s short book *The Triple Focus*, and Linda Lantieri and Daniel Goleman’s book *Building Emotional Intelligence: Practices to Cultivate Inner Resilience in Children*.

Letter to Parents and Caregivers



Date: _____

Dear Parent or Caregiver,

Your child is beginning a program in **Social, Emotional, and Ethical (SEE) Learning**. SEE Learning is a K-12 educational program created by Emory University to enrich young people’s social, emotional, and ethical development. SEE Learning adds to existing social-emotional learning (SEL) programs by including a focus on attention training, compassion and care, an awareness of broader systems, and ethical engagement.

At its core, SEE Learning is about students learning how best to take care of themselves and each other, specifically with regard to what can be termed their emotional and social health. SEE Learning is rooted in compassion: compassion for oneself (self-compassion) and compassion for others. Compassion is not taught as a dictate, however, but through the cultivation of specific skills, such as learning to regulate one’s nervous system and deal with stress, learning about one’s emotions and how to deal with them constructively, learning social and relationship skills, and learning to think in a broader way about the communities and societies we exist in. The aim of SEE Learning is to provide tools for students’ current and future well-being.

Getting Started with Chapter 1

SEE Learning is divided into units or chapters. Chapter 1, “Creating a Compassionate Classroom,” introduces the foundational concepts of kindness and compassion. “Kindness” is the term employed for younger students, whereas “compassion” is employed for older students. Compassion refers to the ability to care for oneself and others, and is taught as source of strength and empowerment, not a sign of weakness or an inability to stand up for oneself or others. A growing body of scientific research (referenced in the *SEE Learning Companion*) points to the positive health and relationship benefits that can come from cultivating compassion.

Home Practice

You are encouraged to take an active role in your child’s experience of SEE Learning. The curriculum is available for you to read, as is a volume called the *SEE Learning Companion*, which includes the Overview and framework used by the program and references to the scientific research that the program is based upon.

For this first chapter, try asking over a meal or at another time, what acts of kindness each person in your household noticed and/or took part in that day. At other times, point out and recognize moments of kindness and compassion to your child when you come across them, and encourage them to do the same. This builds the skill of recognizing and valuing kindness and compassion.

Further Reading and Resources

You can access SEE Learning resources on the web at: www.compassion.emory.edu.

Also recommended is Daniel Goleman and Peter Senge’s short book *The Triple Focus*, and Linda Lantieri and Daniel Goleman’s book *Building Emotional Intelligence: Practices to Cultivate Inner Resilience in Children*.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

Teacher/Educator Signature

Teacher/Educator Printed Name: _____

Teacher/Educator Contact Info: _____



Center for
Contemplative Science and
Compassion-Based Ethics

EMORY UNIVERSITY

Exploring Compassion

PURPOSE

The focus of this first learning experience is to introduce students to SEE Learning through an exploration of kindness and why we need it. The foundation of SEE Learning is compassion and kindness. From the start, it is important for students to explore what compassion is, and why we want it for ourselves and need it. We all want kindness and compassion shown to us, because we all want happiness and well-being, and none of us wants sadness, troubles, and difficulties. If we recognize this, we can understand why we should show compassion

to others, because they too, like us, want to be happy and don't want to be sad. (Note: The next two learning experiences will use this understanding of our shared need for kindness and happiness to create a mutually agreed-on list of class agreements that will support a safe, productive learning environment.)

*The asterisk by a practice denotes that it can be repeated multiple times (with or without modifications).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Explore whether we all want happiness, kindness, and compassion
- Explore the relationship between kindness and happiness.
- Create a personal drawing of kindness that they can use as a resource.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



**Interpersonal
Awareness**

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- The prompts provided below
- A journal for each student and pencils
- Markers or pens for drawing

LENGTH

30 minutes

CHECK-IN | 3 minutes

- *“This year we will be spending some time each week doing SEE Learning: Social, Emotional, and Ethical Learning. SEE Learning uses science, activities, discussions, and reflections to explore our world of thoughts, emotions, our relationships with each other, the decisions we make, and the impact those decisions have on ourselves and others.*
- *We’ll be learning about how to deal with strong emotions and stress, how to take care of ourselves and gain a better understanding of our bodies and minds, and how to get along better with other people or deal with things when we have trouble getting along with others.*
- *SEE Learning is divided into chapters, and in this first chapter we’ll be exploring the concept of compassion and how we can make this classroom a safe, happy, and compassionate environment where we all feel respected, valued, and capable of learning and growing together.”*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY 1 | 12 minutes

Step In, Step Out Activity

Overview

Students will step in and out of a circle depending on whether the prompts the teacher reads apply to them. Then students will take a moment to notice who is on the inside and who is on the outside. This shows who shares that same trait or experience, and who doesn’t.

Content/Insights to be Explored

We have many differences, but wanting happiness and kindness is something we share in common.

Materials Required

Script of prompts, provided below

Instructions

- Students form a circle.
- Using the prompts in the sample script below, ask students to step in if the prompt applies to them.
- Ask students to notice who is on the inside and who is on the outside. Discuss.
- At the end of the prompts tell them:
 - *“Let’s look around. It seems we all feel happier when people are kind to us. Just like we can connect over things that we like or things that we have, like the same number of brothers and sisters, we can connect over something that brings our whole class together: our desire to be happy and for people to be kind to us.”*

Teaching Tips

- You will want to have a large enough area for students to gather in a large circle to step in and out of. You may need to move desks/tables. An option would be to do this activity outside, or in the gymnasium.
- Instead of having students step in and step out of a circle, you can have students form a circle of chairs and have them stand up or

remain seated. Or you could have them raise their hands instead of stepping in. Whichever method you choose, make sure that students can see each other, so they can see how their classmates answer each question.

- In addition to the questions given below in the sample script, add additional questions as you see fit and as time allows. You can also adapt the questions as necessary to your particular students. The point is to begin with things that the students do not all have in common, such as preferences or aspects of their identity, but then move towards what we all have in common: that we want happiness and prefer kindness.
- Pay attention if some students don't step in when asked the final few questions: they may not have understood the questions. But do not feel the need to make students step in or to accept your conclusions: subsequent learning experiences will continue to explore the ideas of happiness and kindness in greater depth, so their views and feelings may change as their understanding progresses.

Sample Script

- *"Let's all form a circle. This circle is a safe circle. People are free to think and feel independently without comment or judgment from others.*
- *If I say something that's true for you, then you'll step into the middle. We are going to try and do this without talking, but instead just noticing what is going on around you.*

- *Let's start.*
- *Step in the center if you have a brother or sister.*
- *Now, stop and take a look and see who else has a brother or sister, or who else doesn't. Now step back please.*
- *Now, we're going to think about some things that you like.*
- *Step in if you like pizza.*
- *Now, take a look and see who else likes pizza. Step back please.*
- *Step into the center if you like to play video games.*
- *Take a look and see who else likes to play video games. Now step back please.*
- *Step in the center if you like playing sports or big active games.*
- *Take a look and see who else likes those things. And step back please.*
- *Who noticed they had a similarity with someone? What was it? [These questions are crucial as this way kids start to connect more and are ready for the next step.]*
- *I notice that only some people step in each time. Let's see what happens if I ask this: Step in if you like to be happy rather than sad.*
- *Now, take a look around. What do you notice about this?*

- *Ah, look! All of us (or most of us) are in the center! It seems that we all like to be happy rather than sad. Now let's step back.*
- *Step in if you feel better when you're happy than when you're sad.*
- *Let's look around. How many of us are here?*
- *Step in if you like it when people are kind and compassionate to you, rather than mean.*
- *Let's look around. Are we all here?*
- *It seems we like it when people are kind and compassionate to us. Now let's step back.*
- *Step in if you feel happier when people are kind and compassionate to you, rather than when they are mean.*
- *Let's look around. It seems we all feel happier when people are kind and compassionate to us.*
- *Just like we can connect over things that we like or things that we have, like the same number of brothers and sisters, we can connect over something that brings our whole class together: our desire to be happy and for people to be kind and compassionate to us.*

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 12 minutes

Remembering and Drawing Kindness*

Overview

Students will produce a drawing of when someone was kind to compassionate to them with some sentences underneath explaining the scene and how they felt.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We can recall memories or imagined acts of kindness and compassionate.
- Kindness and compassion adds to our happiness.
- We all want to be happy.

Materials Required

- A journal for each student
- Pencils, markers, or pens for drawing

Instructions

- Ask students to silently imagine a time when someone was kind or compassionate to them.
- Ask the student to draw the image in their SEE Journal. Then ask them to write a few sentences to answer these questions about the memory/image:
 - What did it look like? What did it feel like? What did you look like? What did you feel like?
- Give students a few minutes to draw and write, guiding individual students as necessary. When it seems that most students are ready, invite them to share.
- When they are sharing, ask them what it felt like when they were shown kindness.
- If students share moments that were not kind, or that made them feel bad, remind them that kindness is something that makes us feel happier when we receive it from others, and ask them to think of another time when they were shown kindness and felt happy receiving that kindness.

- Allow as many students to share as time allows, drawing their attention to the simple fact that we all want kindness and compassionate, because they add to our happiness, and we all want to be happy.

Teaching Tips

- You can do this activity sitting at tables or desks or together as a whole group, sitting in a circle. The script below is written for students sitting at tables or desks.
- Have a few students share their moment of kindness in case others are stuck as this will give some more scaffolding.
- You may want to have the writing prompts written out on the board or on chart paper.
- You may want to model with a drawing you have made with some answers to the prompts for your image.
- Depending on the size of your class and reluctance of some students to talk in a large group, you might ask them to pair up to talk first.
- You can also ask other students what they feel when they see another student sharing their kindness moment, as it may also make them feel happy, or it may remind them of a time when they received a similar kindness.
- This drawing activity can be done more than once in different class sessions, but make sure to save at least one copy of the drawings as they will be used again in later learning experiences. The students can save their own drawing, you can hang them up on the wall, or you can collect them and distribute them again later when they are needed. This activity can be repeated at least once a month.

Sample script

- *"Let's go back to our desks.*
- *Remember how we saw that we all like it when people are kind to us?*
- *Let's be silent for a moment and think about a moment when someone was kind or compassionate to us. Sometimes it is easier to bring memories to our mind if we close our eyes or look at the ground. I'll keep my eyes open.*
- *It could be something very special, or it could be something very simple.*
- *It could be someone helping you, or someone saying something nice to you.*
- *It could be a friend who played with you, or someone giving you a toy or present.*
- *Raise your hand if you've thought of a time when someone was kind to you. [Have a few students share in case others are stuck - this will give some more scaffolding.]*
- *Now we're going to draw and write what happened when someone was kind to us.*
- *We are going to have special journals to record our learning and ideas. Sometimes we will ask you to draw in these journals, sometimes we will ask you to write, sometimes*

both. Today you are going to turn to the first page of your journal and begin drawing and writing.

- Answer these questions about your moment of kindness and compassion: what did it look like? What did it feel like? What did you look like? What did you feel like? [Give students a few minutes to draw and write, guiding individual students as necessary. When it seems that most students are ready, invite them to share.]
- Who would like to share their drawing and tell us about that time?
- These drawings will be available to you in your journal as a resource to come back to if you need a reminder of a kind moment. You are always welcome to look back at what we've done and bring positive feelings forward."

- In one word or sentence, is there anything you learned today about kindness and compassion?" (Invite individual students to share out.)

DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- "What do you think: do we all want to be happy? Do we all like kindness and compassionate more than meanness?
- How do we feel when people are kind and compassionate to us? How do we feel when people are mean?
- This year we're going to be helping each other create a caring classroom. If we all want to be happy, and we all like kindness, then we should learn to be kind and compassionate to each other. So that's what we're going to do.

Exploring Happiness

PURPOSE

The focus of this learning experience is to explore how we all want happiness and well-being, and how this is a basic orientation in our life and is something that we share in common with all human beings and even animals. Understanding that we all want happiness is fundamental to understanding our need for compassion, since as social beings we depend on others for our happiness, and appreciate it when they show consideration for our well-being and happiness.

However, it is not always evident to us that our wish for happiness and to avoid unhappiness underlies our motivations, emotions and actions, and that this is the same for others as well. It takes insight to see that even when people do things that appear to be leading to pain and distress, their underlying motivation is often relief, happiness and well-being. This understanding in turn creates a powerful support for the future topics of self-compassion, empathy, and compassion for others.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Investigate whether they want happiness and don't want distress.
- Explore how universal the wish for happiness and to avoid distress is.
- Explore how this basic orientation underlies human activities, motivations, and emotions.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



**Interpersonal
Awareness**

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Enough space for students to move around an imagined continuum line
- A sign that reads "Yes" and one that reads "No" that can be placed on either end of a line
- Printouts of the "Happiness" sheet—one for each student

LENGTH

30 minutes

CHECK-IN | 3 minutes

- *“Who can remind us what we did last time in our SEE Learning session?”*
 - *(Last time we learned about what we have in common when it comes to compassion and happiness. We did the step in, step out activity and we also drew a moment when we experienced compassion.)”*
-

INSIGHT ACTIVITY 1 | 15 minutes

Stand by Your Experience*

Overview

In this activity, students will be given prompts that will encourage them to think about their wish for happiness, how universal it is, and the role it plays in their motivations and actions. They will be able to agree or disagree with the prompts and then explain why they feel the way they do with others and with the class.

Content/Insights to be Explored

Our wish for happiness and to avoid unnecessary hardship plays a significant role in our lives and in the lives of others, and it underlies our actions, motivations, hopes, and fears.

Materials Required

- Enough space for students to move around an imagined continuum line
- A sign that reads “Yes” and one that reads “No” that can be placed on either end of a line (the line can be imaginary or can be created with colored tape on the ground)
- The prompts noted below

Instructions

- Place the Yes and No signs at opposite ends of a continuum. Allow students to stand wherever they like to begin.
- Let students know that they will be sharing their thoughts with each other and that while this activity is leading them in the direction of making official class agreements together, in the meantime, we need to be respectful of each other’s voices and be kind to each other in our interactions. Ask for a consensus vote on the matter.
- Read the first prompt below.
- Give students 10 seconds to think about it and ask them to think of an example before they move to stand by their answer. Tell them to stand anywhere on the continuum that fits with their experience.
- Once students are in place, ask them to turn and talk to one or two others who are near them and share where they are standing and why. (If a student is standing alone, the teacher should be her partner.)
- Invite 3-4 students from one end of the spectrum to the other to share out in order with the class. Encourage others to maintain an open mind.
- Invite students to move if they have changed their mind. Invite those who move to share what changed for them.
- Continue with the remaining prompts. Make sure all voices have been heard at least once if possible, and be careful of dominating voices.

Teaching Tips

This activity may lead to rich discussions that take time, and if you find you are having a rich discussion during the insight activity, consider extending the activity, eliminating the reflective practice, and ending the session with the debrief. Then come back to the activity the next time you meet, do the remaining prompts, and finish off the second time with the reflective practice.

Sample Script

- *"For this activity, we will be sharing our experiences with each other. Though we don't have formal class agreements with each other yet, this activity is going to help us make them together. Can we agree to be open-minded, kind and to listen to each other's voices during this activity? (Ask for thumbs up to agree, thumbs down to disagree, and thumb in the middle if you're not sure.) If you have consensus, proceed. If not, ask those who disagree or aren't sure what other agreements they need to feel safe during this activity.*
- *I'm going to read you a statement about happiness. I want you to take 10 seconds to think about the statement, your experience with the statement, and an example you might talk about once you move.*
- *Read statement and wait 10 seconds.*
- *Now move to stand on the continuum where your experience is reflected. If you agree completely, stand by Yes. If you disagree completely, stand by No. If you're undecided or if you're somewhere between those two,*

then stand along the line in the middle or closer to Yes or closer to No.

- *Turn and talk to the people close to you on the line. Why are you standing there? What experiences have you had that make you think or feel the way you do?*
- *Let's come back together as a whole group - who would like to share? Let's go from one end of the spectrum to the other. We have time for about 3-4 people. As you are listening to your peers share, think about if your answer is changed. I will give you a chance to move if you would like to.*
- *Please move now if your answer has changed. How and why did your answer change? If it did not, speak about why you think that is.*
- *Repeat the above with the remaining prompts below.*
- *Debrief in a brief discussion: how did this activity change or reinforce your initial ideas about happiness?"*

HAPPINESS STATEMENT PROMPTS

- Everyone wants happiness.
- I know exactly what I need to make me happy.
- If I got what I think I need to make me happy, I would be happy forever.
- I can think of a time when something I thought would make me happy did not actually make me happy in the end.

- Sometimes people do things to be happy, but they end up hurting themselves or others in the process.
- Everyone wants to avoid distress and unhappiness.
- Our wish for happiness motivates us to do everything we do.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 8 minutes

Our Aspirations and Our Wish for Happiness

Overview

In this reflective practice, students will work to connect to a basic orientation towards happiness with those things they find most important and meaningful in their lives.

Content/Insights to be Explored

Our wish for happiness and to avoid unnecessary hardship plays a significant role in our lives and in the lives of others, and it underlies our actions, motivations, hopes, and fears.

Materials Required

- Printouts of the “Happiness” sheet found at the end of this learning experience – one for each student

Instructions

- Use the script below to lead the reflective practice.
- After students have shared, you can ask what they thought or felt when they saw other students sharing.

Teaching Tips

The point is not to try to convince students that each item they write down is connected to their underlying wish to be happy and avoid distress and unhappiness, but to invite a discussion and critical reflection about it.

Sample script

- *“It seems we all want happiness and don’t want distress, pain, and difficulties.*
- *Can we connect this to our own personal lives and what we want and don’t want in our lives?*
- *Sometimes we may not understand why we are doing what we’re doing, but if we connect it to our basic wish for happiness, it can make more sense. We see that the things we feel are most important to us are actually connected to our wish for happiness and well-being.*
- (Provide handout with activities, hopes/dreams, and worries/concerns.)
- *On this sheet we have three categories. We’re going to take a moment to silently think about what activities we like to do and think are important for us, like playing sports, being with friends, doing well in school, and so on.*
- *Then we’re going to think about our hopes and wishes for this year. What do we want to accomplish? If we could achieve certain things by the end of this year, what would we want that to be?*

- *The last column is for worries and concerns. If you think about this coming year, do you have any specific worries or concerns?*
- *As you think and write, you should know that this is for yourself and no one else needs to see this unless you want to show it to someone.*
- *Let's begin now and let's do this in silence so that we can concentrate and reflect.*
- *(Give 3-4 minutes for this. You may wish to tell them when they have 30 seconds remaining that you will be wrapping up in 30 seconds.)*
- *Now let's look at what we wrote and see if each of the items we wrote down is related to our wish for happiness and to avoid distress, unpleasantness, and unhappiness.*
- *If you see something that reflects this underlying wish, then you can circle it. If you see something that doesn't seem connected to your wish for happiness, or you're not sure, then you can put a question mark next to it.*
- *(Give one minute for this or more if necessary.)*
- *Would anyone be willing to share one thing that they circled, tell us what it is, and explain how it connects to their wish for happiness?*
- *Would anyone be willing to share one thing that they put a question mark next to?"*

After students have shared, you can ask what they thought or felt when they saw other students sharing.

DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- *"Let's take a moment to think about what we discussed today. Is there anything that you realized or heard that has stuck with you or seemed particularly important? If so, you can share it in a single word as we go around one by one. If not, you can pass.*
- *Is there anything that you still have a question about or would like to talk more about next time? If so, you can share it in a single word, or you can pass."*

Happiness

Activities I Do that I Care About	My Hopes and Dreams for this Year	My Fears and Worries for this Year

Class Agreements

PURPOSE

The focus of this learning experience is to further explore the idea of kindness, compassion and consideration and how we all benefit from them by creating a mutually agreed-on list of class agreements that will support a safe, productive learning environment. The creation of agreements by students helps them explore compassion in a direct way that shows the clear implications of our need for compassion within the context of a shared space with others. It also increases

their own investment in what is seen as constructive and non-constructive behavior in the classroom, since they can see how the items in the list directly impact themselves and others. It also orients students towards attending to the reality of others' presence and their feelings and needs.

*The asterisk by a practice denotes that it can be repeated multiple times (with or without modifications).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Explore several practical implications of our need for compassion for how we act with each other.
- Identify agreements that can help create a compassionate, caring classroom.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS

Interpersonal
Awareness

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- A piece of plain chart paper that can be hung on the wall with the header "In our classroom we agree to..."
- A board or a second piece of chart paper for scratch ideas
- Markers

LENGTH

45 minutes, split into 2 days if possible
(30 minutes on day 1; 15 minutes on day 2)

CHECK-IN | 3 minutes

- *“Who can remind us what we did last time in our SEE Learning session?”*
- (Last time we talked about whether we all want happiness, whether we share this with all people, and how this orientation towards happiness underlies all our actions, hopes, and concerns.)
- *Does anybody remember some of the things we talked about and shared?*
- *Do you think the world would be different if we showed each other more compassion, kindness and consideration? How?*
- *What about our school experience? How might it be different if we showed each other more compassion?*
- *To do that we have to think a bit about how exactly we would do it. In this session of SEE Learning we’re going to think about how we want to be with each other as a class to support each other’s happiness and our collective happiness.”*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 24 minutes

Creating Classroom Agreements

Overview

Students will consider what would contribute to happiness, kindness, and compassion in the classroom and make a list of class agreements.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We all want compassion and happiness.

- There are specific actions we can take to support each others’ happiness.

Materials Required

- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Markers

Instructions

- Ask students what we can agree on to do with each other so we have a fun, safe, caring, and happy class.
- Take lots of suggestions and start a list on a board or the piece of scratch chart paper where all the students can see it. If needed, you can prompt the students with possible ideas, such as:
 - kindness
 - having fun
 - not bullying
 - helping each other
 - sharing/taking turns
 - showing respect for each other
 - listening to each other
 - not being mean
 - not shouting
 - asking for help
 - paying attention
 - saying sorry

Teaching Tips

You can allow any student to answer the follow-up questions, not just the one who made the initial suggestion.

Sample script

- *“Let’s try to make a list of how we would like our class to be.*
- *We all want to be happy, so that’s something we all have in common.*
- *And we saw that one thing that makes us happier is when people are kind to us.*
- *So kindness might be one thing we would put on the list. What do you think?*
- *What else might we put on the list that we will agree to do as a class so that we can be happy and have a safe, caring classroom?*
- *When a student suggests something, use it as an opportunity to have the all students delve deeper by prompting them with one or two questions like:*
 - *What does that mean?*
 - *What does that look like?*
 - *What would happen if we all did that?*
 - *What would happen if we didn’t do that?*

[Continue this process as time allows.]

INSIGHT ACTIVITY

15 minutes (another day, if possible)*

Creating Classroom Agreements, part 2

Overview

Students will continue to consider what would contribute to happiness and kindness in the classroom and make a list of class agreements.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We all want compassion and happiness.
- There are specific actions we can take to support each others’ happiness.

Materials Required

- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Markers
- The list made in previous activity

Instructions

- Together, group the agreements and write them on the piece of chart paper that has the heading “In our classroom we agree to...”
 - For this, it’s important to put them into action statements that are in the affirmative, like “Be kind” or “Be helpful” or “Ask for help when we need it.”
- Read the agreements aloud together.
- It is helpful for kids to sign the agreements chart and hang it in the classroom.
- Remind students that you are making the agreements so we feel happier and safe here in our classroom.

Teaching Tips

- If possible, complete this insight activity the day after the first one. Students often need time to let the ideas about their agreements settle and marinate; sometimes they even come up with more the next time you sit down together.
- If you are able to complete this activity a day after the first one, use the provided check-in below to get started.

Sample script

- [Check-in if you are completing on a different day: *"Last time we met we came up with a big list of things we needed to feel safe and happy in our classroom space. Today we are going to look back at the list. If you realize there was something you wanted to add, let me know."*]
- *Maybe we can put some of these together if they are similar, so that we can have a few main agreements that we can remember.*
- *On this sheet it says, "In our classroom we agree to..." So we can put our agreements after that from the list we just created.*
- *I wonder if these go together?*
- *And we can put them in this form, "Be kind..."*
- [Continue this process as time allows.]
- *Now we have some agreements we can make with each other.*
- *Let's take a look at them and read them out loud together.*

- *We're going to try to do this for ourselves so we feel happier and safe here in our classroom.*
- *Let's keep thinking about this list until we meet again, when we might have more to add."*

DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- *"This year we are going to learn about how best to be kind, compassionate, and considerate to ourselves and others. We'll be learning ways to do this, and this agreement that we created together is our first step!"*
- *In one word or sentence, is there anything you learned today that you might use another time to help yourself or someone else meet their needs?"* (Ask students to share out, or write in their journals.)

EXTRA PRACTICE

- Over the next week or two have students write in their journals related to the class agreements. For example, if one agreement is "create a physically safe place for ourselves and others" a journal prompt could be: what does this look like, what would it look like if we didn't do this, why is this important.
- Another idea is to do an idea map/graffiti wall of the agreement. In small groups, students get one agreement and brainstorm words, short phrases, and pictures that come to their mind when they think of this agreement.

Practicing Kindness and Compassion

PURPOSE

The focus of this learning experience is to build on prior learning and engage in the actual modeling and practice of kindness for experiential and embodied understanding. This involves two steps: an insight activity whereby the students translate the class agreements into practical examples that can be acted out; and then a practice activity where they act out those examples in front of each other and reflect on what they experienced. By acting out the very same items they said they wanted in the classroom,

they will come to a better understanding of compassion, of their class agreements, and of how they look in practice. This process of embodied understanding should continue as the school year goes on and will make it easier to refer to the class agreements concretely throughout the year.

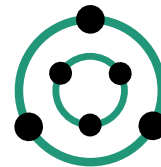
*The asterisk by a practice denotes that it can be repeated multiple times (with or without modifications).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Develop specific ways of exhibiting kindness based on the class agreements.
- Apply their understanding of kindness in concrete individual and collective actions.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Relationship Skills

LENGTH

30 minutes (You will likely want to repeat this learning experience more than once so that you can get through all your class agreements.)

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Your class agreements listed on a piece of chart paper or on the board
- Your class agreements, each one on a separate sheet of paper

CHECK-IN | 3 minutes

- *“Let’s take a moment to sit quietly and rest our minds and bodies so that we can think a bit. [Pause.] Maybe you are tired or full of energy, maybe it’s been a challenging morning (day) or an exciting one. Either way, it’s okay.*
 - *Now let’s all see if we can think of any moments of kindness or compassion in the day so far. Maybe something happened at home or on your way to school or as recently as just a minute ago. See what comes up for you. Don’t worry if you can’t think of something, you can always imagine a moment of kindness too. [Pause.]*
 - *Let’s sit with your moment of kindness for a little bit.*
 - *Would anyone like to share what they thought of?*
 - *How did that make you feel?*
 - *Anyone else?”*
-

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 22 minutes

Turning Class Agreements into Helping Actions*

Overview

In small groups, students will get act out one of the agreements. The rest of the class will guess which agreement they are modeling. You will likely want to repeat this learning experience more than once so that you can get through all your class agreements.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We all want kindness and happiness.

- There are specific actions we can take to support each others’ happiness.

Materials Required

- Your class agreements listed on a piece of chart paper or on the board
- Each class agreement typed (or written) on separate sheets of paper

Instructions

- After you have agreed on your class agreements, put them each on an individual pieces of paper (one agreement per sheet).
- Divide your group into small groups (3-5 students each) and give each group one agreement.
- Tell them they will be in charge of acting out their agreement to show what it looks like in action. The groups will think of the best way to demonstrate the agreement and quickly practice before showing the class. Provide 3-5 minutes for deciding and practicing.
- When groups are ready, groups will act out the agreement in front of the rest of the class. Other students in the audience can even be asked to guess which of the agreements is being acted out instead of being told before each performance. If you run out of time, you can continue during the next class.

Teaching Tips

- Try this format with several of the class agreements. When you come to a good

stopping point, you can suggest returning to the rest of the agreements during other class meeting times. Eventually you will have specific ideas connected to each general agreement.

- It would be helpful to record these “skits” as references for the rest of the year.
- It’s important to have students act out positive behaviors instead of having them demonstrate less desirable behaviors.

Sample script

- *“Last time we were together, we worked on class agreements. Why is it important for us to have these kinds of agreements with each other? [Allow several students to share.]*
- *If no one says it, add: We have these class agreements so we feel happier and safe here in our classroom.*
- *Today we’re going to act out what some of our agreements look like. First I’m going to divide you into small groups.*
- *Now that you are in small groups, I will give each group one of the agreements. As a group, you are in charge of acting out this agreement to show what it looks like in action. You will have just a short amount of time to brainstorm, agree, and practice your brief skit. Then you will act it out for the rest of the class. [Provide 3-5 minutes for deciding and practicing.]*
- *Ok, let’s have our first group present to the class. Those of you in the audience, be*

prepared to guess which of the agreements is being acted out. If we run out of time, we can finish during our next class together.”

- [Repeat for each small group until you make it through all the agreements.]

DEBRIEF | 4 minutes

- *“Let’s take a moment to sit and think about what we just saw and felt.*
- *Did you notice how you felt when you saw people needing help or getting help?*
- *It often feels good not just to get help but to give it, and even to see someone being helped. It can make us feel happier and safer when we are helped by others and when they show us kindness.*
- *Is there anything you learned or practiced about kindness or compassion that you might like to use again sometime?*
- *Is there anything you think we should add to the class agreements after what we did today?”*

EXTRA PRACTICE

- It’s important for students to be able to practice kindness and compassion in authentic situations. Over the next week, set a goal each day for students to practice one of the agreements (this can be set at the beginning of the day) and then check-in to see how it went. This can also be brought back throughout the year when students seem to be becoming lax about class agreements.

- In SEE journals, students can write about how they would respond if someone were violating a class agreement. For example, “if we saw someone not respecting classroom property, what could we do”. They can also journal about instances when they saw someone following the class agreements or when they personally did so.

Compassion as an Inner Quality

PURPOSE

The focus of this learning experience is to go further into the idea of kindness and compassion by exploring whether it is just outer actions or also something inside one's heart and mind. We easily associate kindness with external activities, like giving someone food or money, saying sweet words to someone, or helping someone up when they fall. But if the intention behind those actions and words is to take advantage of the other person, then we do not see that as real or genuine kindness; nor do we see it as genuine

help. For students to understand how to cultivate compassion as a disposition, which lies at the heart of SEE Learning, they will be aided by understanding that compassion goes deeper than just external actions but also refers to a state of mind and heart: one's intention to bring help and happiness to another person.

*The asterisk by a practice denotes that it can be repeated multiple times (with or without modifications).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

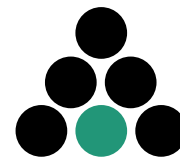
Students will:

- Explore compassion in the context of outer actions and inner intentions and motivations.
- Recognize the distinction between real (inner, genuine) kindness and apparent kindness.
- Develop their own definition of compassion.
- Provide examples of actions that might seem unkind, but are really kind, and vice versa.

LENGTH

35 minutes

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Compassion for Others

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Chart paper with "compassion" written in the middle of each, enough for 1 piece per small group
- Markers
- Students' SEE Learning journals; writing utensils
- The scenarios provided below
- The kindness drawings made in learning experience 2

CHECK-IN | 3 minutes

- *“Last time we talked about how we could create a kind, caring classroom and we created some classroom agreements. Does anybody remember some of the things we talked about and put on our list? [Allow time for sharing.]”*
- *“Today we are going to think about how we can practice compassion.”*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 15 minutes

Scenarios

Overview

In this activity, you will read one or more scenarios to the students that show how we all naturally prefer kindness, consideration, and compassion, because they make us feel safe and secure, but that we also want genuine kindness, not just apparent kindness. Our preference for kindness is something so basic that we even share it with birds and mammals, who prefer those who protect and feed them over those who threaten them. Scenarios are provided for you here to generate discussions around our preference for kindness and compassion, and how genuine kindness and compassion refer to inner qualities. If someone pretends to be compassionate, but really intends to take advantage of someone, then we do not see that as genuine compassion. If students come to understand that compassion is an inner quality, not just apparently kind actions, then they will realize that to cultivate compassion, we need to cultivate that inner quality, not just act outwardly in a particular way

or adhere to certain behaviors. The questions after the scenarios are intended to elicit these *critical insights*:

- We naturally prefer kindness and compassion and want to move towards them and away from meanness
- Kindness and compassion make us feel safer and more secure
- Compassion is an inner quality
- Pretend kindness (outward actions without a good intention) is not genuine compassion

Feel free to modify details from the scenario to suit your class and school. If you have time, it can be even more effective if you have some students act out the scenarios. The scenarios are provided as scripts at the end of the learning experience.

Scenario 1

The Rich Woman and the Charity

A representative from a charity goes to a wealthy woman (or man) to ask for a donation to assist people who are homeless.

“I know you’ve been very generous to charities in the past,” the representative said. “Please would you give us a donation? It would make a big difference to a lot of people who are in need.”

“How will I be recognized if I make a donation?” the woman asked. “It’s important that people know that I made the donation, not someone else.”

"The homeless people you help will all be so grateful, and they will all be told that it was you who helped them," said the representative.

"But I want other people to know too, not just the homeless people," she said. "Will it be in the news?"

"Oh yes," said the representative. "And if your donation is large enough, you will be specially honored at our annual party celebration with a trophy."

The woman smiled. "In that case, I agree."

Scenario 2

The Basketball Captain and the Recruit

The captain of the basketball (or another sports) team sees potential in a new student and really wants her (or him) to join the team, thinking it will help the team win the championship that year. The new student doesn't particularly want to join, though, and tells the captain this. The captain gets the members of the team to be really nice to the new student, giving her presents, saying all sorts of nice things to her.

Scenario 3

The Two Brothers and the Kitten

Two brothers were playing in a park one day and when they saw a beautiful little kitten. The older brother thought, "Oh, what a pretty kitten!" and he wanted to capture it for himself, so he threw a stick at it and started to chase it. The kitten got scared and tried to run away, but since it couldn't run very well yet, it had trouble escaping him.

The younger brother said, "Stop! Don't hurt the kitten! It's only a baby!" and he went to go and help the kitten and protect it. When he reached the kitten, he petted it and offered it some food. But the older brother got angry and kept trying to get at the kitten and catch it. Then their mother came by and said, "What's going on?"

"That kitten is mine," said the older brother, who wanted to capture it. "I saw it first! Make him give it to me!"

"No, don't give it to him," said the younger brother. "He tried to hurt it."

"I don't know what happened because I wasn't here to see it," said the mother. "Maybe we should let the kitten decide."

The older brother who had tried to hurt and capture the kitten tried to call to her sweetly. "Please come to me little kitten! I will take good care of you!"

The mother placed the kitten between the two boys to see who it would go to, and she said to it, "Who do you choose?"

Discussion of Scenario(s)

- *"How do you think the different people in the scenario were feeling? (Go through the different characters in the scenario.) If they could talk to us, what would they be saying?"*
- *What do you think might happen next in the scenario?*

- *Did you see examples of kindness or compassion in the story? Why or why not?*
- *Is compassion just the outer action, like sweet words or making a donation, or is it also something inside us? An inner quality? What would we call it—an emotion, a motivation, a thought, an intention? Some or all of these? (Note that you are prompting thinking but not seeking a single “right” answer at this point, so welcome all thoughts.)*
- *Can you think of other examples where someone pretends to be kind, but their intention is not compassionate? (Someone helping or donating to charity just to look good, etc.)*
- *What about the reverse? Could something that looks unkind on the surface really be compassionate? Can you think of an example? (A parent saying “No” to their child to protect them; someone scaring away animals who are moving towards danger; someone taking away a dangerous object from a little child even though the child wants it; etc.)”*

reach all the insights at once, since they will be returned to continuously in future learning experiences.

These are a few sample questions you can use to have a discussion and encourage the students to explore the scenario and its various dimensions. Feel free to add your own questions and respond to the flow of the discussion. Allow them to share openly and remember that there are no right or wrong answers, but also keep in mind the critical insights (listed above) that you are orienting them towards. These insights have to come naturally, and it’s all right if not all the students

Scenario 1

The Rich Woman and the Charity

Narrator: A representative from a charity goes to a wealthy woman (or man) to ask for a donation to assist people who are homeless.

Charity representative: "I know you've been very generous to charities in the past. Please, would you give us a donation? It would make a big difference to a lot of people who are in need."

Potential Donor: "How will I be recognized if I make a donation? It's important that people know that I made the donation, not someone else."

Charity representative: "The homeless people you help will all be so grateful, and they will all be told that it was you who helped them."

Potential Donor: "But I want other people to know too, not just the homeless people," she said. "Will it be in the news?"

Charity representative: "Oh yes. And if your donation is large enough, you will be specially honored at our annual party celebration with a trophy."

Potential Donor: [smiling hugely]: "In that case, I agree."

End

Scenario 2

The Basketball Captain and the Recruit

Narrator: The captain of the basketball (or another sports) team sees potential in a new student and really wants her (or him) to join the team, thinking it will help the team win the championship that year..

Team Member 1: Hey, I wanted to give you this!

New Student: Thanks, but what for?

Team Member 2: Duh, because you're super cool and your basketball skills are awesome!

New Student: Thanks! You really think so?

Team Member 1: Of course! Your form is great and I've never seen you miss a free throw. You're a natural!

New Student: Gosh, thanks, you guys.

Team Member 2: Imagine just how much more fun you'd have if you joined our basketball team. I might even be able to get you another one of these if you did

New Student: Hm, that seems cool, but I was planning on focusing more on my art this year.

Team Member 1: Yeah! Just think about it; you, us, our other teammates, and our captain. We would be unstoppable.

Scenario 2

The Basketball Captain and the Recruit (continued)

Team Member 2: Since you're new here, this is a guaranteed way to be cool/popular. Plus, you shouldn't put your talent to waste. We could really use your skills. I think it's a valuable trade.

New Student: Thanks, you guys but really, I'm okay with my decision.

Team Member 1: Oh, come on! We've been pretty nice to you and we're kind of friends now. You can't let us down like that, especially with the championships coming up.

Team Member 2: Yeah, just think about it; winning the championships! Imagine not being there with us. Do you think you'll make any friends otherwise?

End

Scenario 3

The Two Brothers and the Kitten

Narrator: Two brothers were playing in a park one day and then they saw a beautiful little kitten. The older brother thought, "Oh, what a pretty kitten!" and he wanted to capture it for himself, so he threw a stick at it and started to chase it. The kitten got scared and tried to run away, but since it couldn't run very well yet, it had trouble escaping him.

Scenario 3

The Two Brothers and the Kitten (continued)

Younger brother: "Stop! Don't hurt the kitten! It's only a baby!"

Narrator: Then he went to go and help the kitten and protect it. When he reached the kitten, he petted it and offered it some food. But the older brother got angry and kept trying to get at the kitten and catch it. Then their mother came by

Mother: "What's going on?"

Older brother: "That kitten is mine! I saw it first! I wanted to capture it! Make him give it to me!"

Younger brother: "No, don't give it to him. He tried to hurt it."

Mother: "I don't know what happened because I wasn't here to see it. Maybe we should let the kitten decide."

Narrator: The older brother who had tried to hurt and capture the kitten tried to call to her sweetly.

Older brother: "Please come to me little kitten! I will take good care of you!"

Narrator: The mother placed the kitten between the two boys to see who it would go to.

Mother: [to the kitten] "Who do you choose?"

End

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 15 minutes

Making and Reflecting on a Definition of Compassion

Overview

In this reflective practice, students will make a word map of the word “compassion.” This will be used to develop a simple definition of compassion (one or two sentences) for use in the classroom. The students will take moments for silent reflection during the making of this definition and after making it to allow this wider understanding of compassion to deepen in them.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We all prefer compassion and want to move towards compassion and away from meanness.
- Compassion makes us feel safer and more secure.
- Compassion is an inner quality.
- Pretend kindness (outward actions without a good intention) is not genuine compassion.

Materials Required

- Chart paper with “compassion” written in the middle of each (1 piece per small group)
- Markers
- Students’ SEE Learning journals
- Writing utensils
- The kindness drawings made in learning experience 2

Instructions

- Ask students to silently think about the scenarios and the discussion.
- Ask them to think about the word compassion and what it means to them. Next, divide them into small groups.
- Pass out chart paper with “compassion” written in the middle - one per group. In small groups, students will come up with ideas and words that explain compassion. Tell them to write their ideas around the chart paper.
- After 5-7 minutes, regroup all together. Have a big piece of chart paper with “compassion” written in the middle.
- Ask students to share some of their ideas and add them to the poster. New ideas may come up as they share.
- When you feel like enough has been shared (this can be done on a different day), ask students to move to sit on their own and take out their SEE Learning journal. Ask them to write one sentence that defines compassion.
- Students can share their sentences at the end of this activity or at a later point.

Teaching Tips

- Note: Many of the reflective practices in SEE Learning involve moments of silent reflection for students to think, ponder, and internalize their insights. How long these moments should be will depend on the classroom environment and your students. They can

be as short as 15 seconds or can be as long as a few minutes. You will be the best judge of the appropriate amount of time. You may find that with practice, the students will get more comfortable and familiar with these moments, and that you can prolong them for longer periods of time.

- You may consider asking students to do this small group portion of the activity in silence as a challenge - maybe for just a few minutes or half the time allotted.
- You may want to display their definitions of kindness in some way in your room as reference points - for example, students could make sentence strips of their definitions and they could be placed on the walls.

Sample script

- *"I wonder if we could come up with one sentence to explain what compassion is so that if someone asked us "What does compassion mean?" we can tell them.*
- *Let's take a quiet moment to think about the story and our discussion about it.*
- *I'm going to divide you into small groups. Your group is going to get a piece of paper with the word kindness in the middle. You and your group will come up words that are like compassion that we can use to explain what compassion is. You may look at your kindness drawings to help you.*
- [Allow students to work in small groups for 5-7 minutes.]

- *Let's hear from each group. What shall we add to our classroom agreements?*
- *We have lots of good ideas up here. Now, as a last step is to come up with a definition of compassion. You are going to go back to you spot, with your SEE journal and write one sentence that defines kindness. You can even start the sentence with "compassion means...".*
- [Allow students to work in small groups for 3-5 minutes. If time allows, ask students to share their sentences.]

DEBRIEF | 2 minutes

"What is something you learned about compassion today?"

Recognizing Compassion & Exploring Interdependence

PURPOSE

The focus of this learning experience is to practice recognizing compassion and exploring interdependence. Although students will already have some notions of what compassion looks like, by looking deeper at everyday activities and seeing the various ways compassion is involved, their appreciation for compassion can grow further. Similarly, though students may have some idea of the concept of interdependence, the simple activity of mapping an accomplishment and all the things that that accomplishment depended on can help them see interdependence more clearly. Interdependence refers to the fact that every object and event comes into being from a variety of causes, in the sense that it depends on other things. Exploring interdependence

can be a powerful tool for recognizing how we depend on others and others depend on us; it can underscore the importance of reciprocity; and it can serve as a foundation for gratitude and a feeling of connectedness to others. It also supports systems thinking, since interdependence is a feature of all systems.

In SEE Learning, capacities like our ability to recognize compassion and interdependence are approached as skills that, while innate, can also be strengthened and enhanced through repeated practice. Practicing the skill of recognizing compassion and interdependence can lead to a deeper appreciation for how essential they are to our everyday life, our happiness, and even our very survival.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Recognize acts of compassion in their day.
- Recognize interdependence as a feature of our shared reality.
- Recognize how the objects and events that we need come from the acts of countless others.

LENGTH

35 minutes

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Interpersonal Awareness

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Whiteboard or chart paper
- Markers
- SEE Learning journals
- Writing utensils

CHECK-IN | 5 minutes

- *“Can anyone remember what we said compassion means? We created a way of explaining it to others. Who remembers what we said?”*
- *Let’s look at our explanation of what compassion is now. I wrote it up on this piece of paper.*
- *Have any of you felt compassion today? Yes? What was it like? If you can’t think of a moment of compassion from today, you can imagine one if you like.*
- *Let’s take a moment to sit for a few seconds and remember what compassion feels like. If you are comfortable with it, close your eyes and really try to picture that moment when someone was kind to you or when you felt kindly towards someone else. Or if you are using your imagination, just imagine that moment. [Pause.]*
- *Thank you. Can some of you share some of the acts of compassion that you thought of?”*

Teaching Tips

- Use your discretion in guiding this, as you know your own class. Encourage them to think of any moment - no matter how small. It could be the crossing guard who smiled at them, or they handed someone a marker when they needed it, or they smiled at someone they don’t usually pay attention to. Let your students know that it’s ok if they can’t think of a time, because they can imagine one. As you practice with this, it will get easier. Encourage

curiosity: the feeling that we’re all just exploring and wondering about this together.

- It’s possible you may wish to do the check-in during a morning meeting time, and then save the other parts of the learning experience for later in the day. That way, children will already be oriented towards thinking about compassion when you come to the activities.

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 5 minutes

Recognizing Compassion*

Overview

In this activity you will invite students to share moments of compassion that they observed or participated in during the day, guiding them to reflect on how it made them and others feel, and challenging them to recognize as many forms of compassion as they can.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We see countless acts of compassion around us every day, but we may recognize very few of them if we do not look deeply.

Materials Required

- Whiteboard or chart paper
- Markers

Instructions

You can begin by asking them how many acts of compassion you think the class will come up with from just things that happened to them today and write the numbers they propose on the board. Then, at the end of the activity, ask

them if they think their original guesses were correct, too low, or too high.

Teaching Tips

As in every insight activity, students may have other critical insights as you go along—if so, record them or note them on the board so that you can return to them later. This is a quick exercise that can be done many times throughout the year that reinforces that compassion is all around.

Sample script

- *“So, I have a question for you. If you think about our day together in school, how many “compassionate acts” do you think you could count? 10? 20? [Let them make guesses and write the numbers on the board or chart paper.]*
- *Ok I’m going to write those numbers down on the board here so we can check them again later.*
- *Now, let’s see how many acts of compassion we can come up with. Who can think of something that happened today that was an example of compassion? Did anyone show you compassion today? Or did you do anything that was compassionate for someone else?*
- [Allow for student sharing. If you like you can write a single word or phrase that captures what was shared on the board so that a list begins to grow. After the student has shared, you can ask follow up questions, such as: Why was that compassionate? How did it make

you feel? How do you think it made the other person feel?]

- [You can ask these follow-up questions to other students as well, not just the student who shared, so that they can think about the various ways the action was kind and how it might have made others feel.]
- *Now let’s try to look more deeply. I wonder if we can find even more acts of compassion?*
- *Do you think there might have been compassion that we didn’t even know about or notice?*
- *We found a lot of acts of compassion when we looked deeply, didn’t we? How does it feel to know that we are surrounded by so many acts of compassion?*
- *Now, let’s see. How many did we find? Did we find more than we thought we would? (You can compare with the numbers the students suggested earlier and that you wrote on the board.)*
- *It seems we can find a lot of acts of compassion if we look for them. But if we don’t look, we might not see them.”*

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 20 minutes

Recognizing Interdependence

Overview

In this activity students will form groups and draw a web of interdependence starting with a single accomplishment, event, or object.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Objects and events exist in a web of interdependence; they depend on countless other objects and events.
- We are connected to and depend on countless other people in a variety of ways, even if they are strangers to us.

Materials Required

- A large sheet of paper for each group to draw on
- Markers

Instructions

- If necessary for your group, model the activity to demonstrate what you want them to do in small groups. (The script below includes modeling at two different points in the activity.)
- Divide the class into groups of 4 or 5 students each.
- Ask each group to identify an important accomplishment or event that they share in common or have all participated in in some way. Examples include going on a trip; learning to ride a bike; learning to play a game; learning to read and write; and so on. Provide 1 or 2 minutes for this.
- If they cannot think of an event or accomplishment that they all have in common, ask them to identify an object made by humans that they all need.
- Ask them to draw this accomplishment, event, or object in the middle of their sheet of paper.

This will be their subject.

- Ask them to create a first circle by adding (drawing or writing) anything their subject depends on or needs to exist. They can draw a line connecting these things to their subject. For example, if they chose “learning to ride a bike” as their subject, they might add a teacher, a friend, the bicycle, a flat surface to ride on, the person who invented bicycles, and so on. Or if they choose a pencil as their subject, they could add wood, lead, a factory, paint, and so on. Ask them to see if they can think of at least 10 people or things their subject depends on.
- Ask them to now add and draw what the items in that first circle themselves depend on. Again have them draw lines connecting the new items as they are added.
- Have them continue the process freely, selecting any item on the page and identifying things or people it depends on. Monitor each group to provide guidance as necessary. You can prompt them to think further by asking questions like, “This item here. Does it exist all by itself or does it need other people or things for it to exist?”
- When each group has had sufficient time to fill out most of the paper, stop the groups and ask them to estimate how many people in total are needed for their subject. For example, how many people in total are needed for that pencil to be made? Or how many people in total are needed for you to learn to ride a bike? Give them a minute to

calculate this and ask them to write it on their sheet of paper.

- Invite each group to share. They should explain their subject; show the various aspects of the interdependence web they created; and then share their estimate of how many people were involved.

Teaching Tip

As in every insight activity, students may have other critical insights as you go along—if so, record them or note them on the board so that you can return to them later.

Sample script

- *“We have done much investigation about compassion in our lives, and one insight that we might have seen is that compassion rarely involves just you - usually kind acts that occur in our lives involve at least one other person. We call this interdependence: we constantly depend on others. Interdependence is not limited to kind acts, but everyday things that we use or experiences that we’ve had.*
- *Today, we are going to investigate this idea of interdependence more deeply. In a small group, you and your peers will come up with an important accomplishment or event that you have in common: Examples for you might include going on a trip; learning to ride a bike; learning to play a game; learning to read and write; and so on. When your group has decided on one, draw or write it in the middle of your piece of paper that you will have. This will be your subject.*

- [Divide the class into small groups of 4-5 students. And have them complete the activity up through instructions you have given so far.]
- *Now, think about people and things that your subject depends on. Each time you think of something, write it down, circle it, and draw a line connecting it to the subject. First, let me show you how I did this. For my accomplishment, in my imaginary group of a few other adults, we chose “learning to drive a car” as our accomplishment that we all have in common. I’ll write/draw that in the center of the paper.*
- *Next, we discussed who and what that accomplishment depended on for each of us to achieve. I put down “my dad” because he had me drive his car in a parking lot to get some practice. Another person in my group said “the tires” because without the tires, I couldn’t have driven the car.*
- *Try and come up with 10 things that your subject depends on and write or draw them on your group’s paper. [Allow enough time for this to happen.]*
- *Draw a circle around each thing you wrote that your subject depends on. Now, we are going to take this even further. We are going to look at each item we have already written down and think, what does that item depend on? For my example, I will focus on “the tires.” The tires on the car would not exist if someone in a factory somewhere did not make them, so I will write “factory worker” out next to “the tires.”*

- Go ahead and add branches to each circle, writing or drawing what each thing depends on. Create appropriate branches as best you can. See how many connections you can make." [When this is finished, invite groups to share. If time does not allow this, the sharing part can be at a different time.]

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 5 minutes

Recognizing Interdependence in One's Life

Materials Required

- SEE Learning journals
- Writing utensils

Instructions

- Have your students take out their SEE Learning journal for some private journaling in silence. Explain that they do not have to share what they write if they don't want to.
- Ask them to choose something important in their life: an event, accomplishment, person, or object. This will serve as their subject. They will journal for 5 minutes about what their subject depends on. They can draw it out as an interdependence web, or they can simply write in sentences.

DEBRIEF | 5 minutes

- "Look at your personal web of interdependence or your group's web. What does it feel like to think of yourself as a part of this web? What do you think about this idea?"
- How might reflecting on interdependence lead us to feel grateful? How is interdependence related to compassion?"

MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 2

Building Resilience

Overview

Chapter 1 explored the concepts of kindness and happiness what they mean for us when we are together in the form of class agreements. Chapter 2 explores the important role that our bodies, and in particular our nervous systems, play in our happiness and well-being. It does so by introducing the following:

The Resilient Zone

A way of describing when we and our nervous system are regulated (in homeostasis) and neither hyper-aroused (stuck in the high zone) nor hypo-aroused (stuck in the low zone). You can also refer to this as the “OK zone” or “zone of well-being.”

Sensations

A physical feeling or perception within the body or using the five senses, as distinct from emotions and non-physical feelings (like feeling happy or sad).

Tracking

Noticing and attending to sensations in the body in order to build up body awareness or “body literacy.”

Personal Resources

Things one likes and associates with greater safety and well-being that can be brought to mind to return to or stay in one’s resilient zone.

Grounding

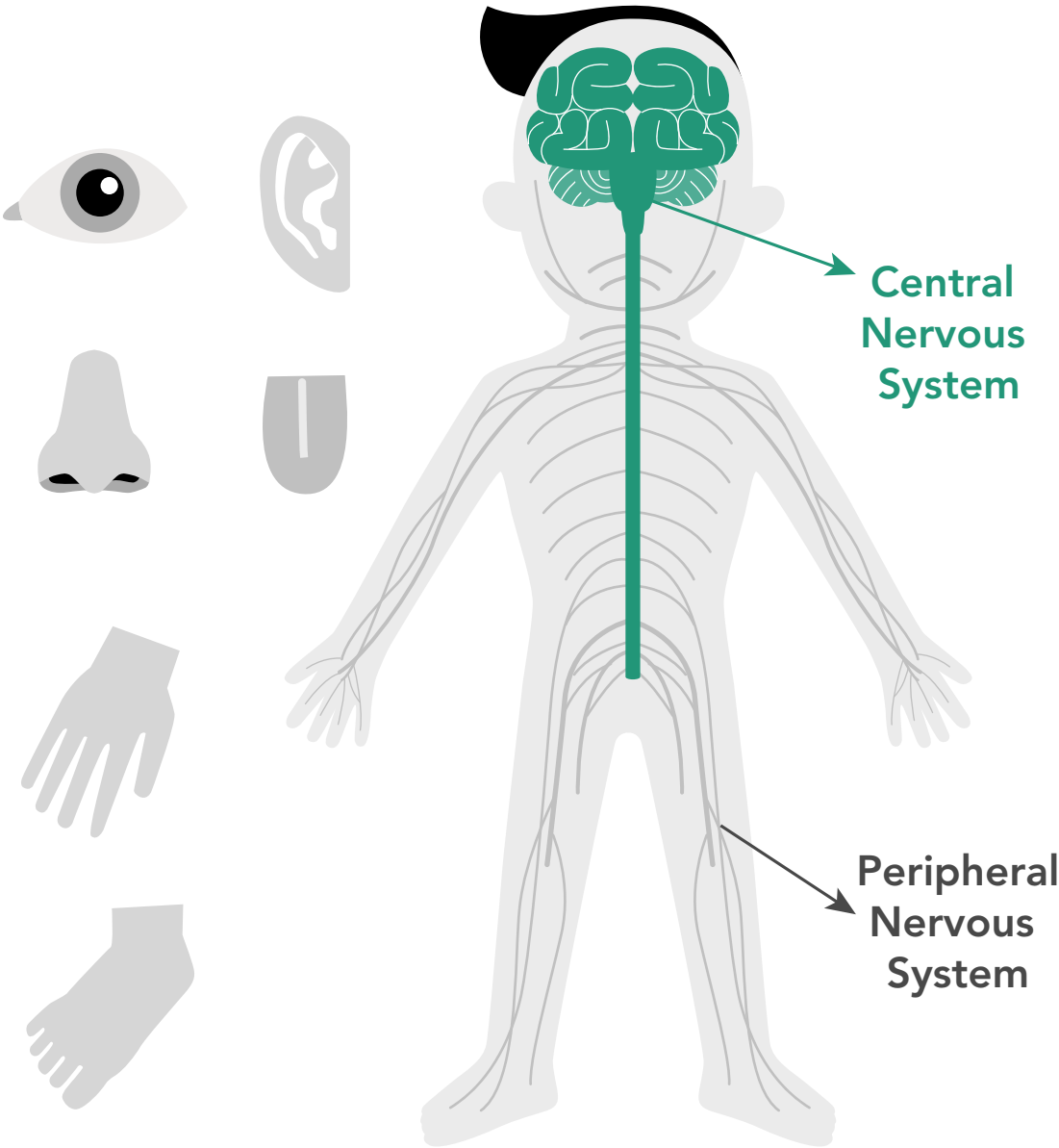
Attending to the contact of one’s body with objects or the ground in order to return to or stay in the resilient zone.

Help Now! Strategies

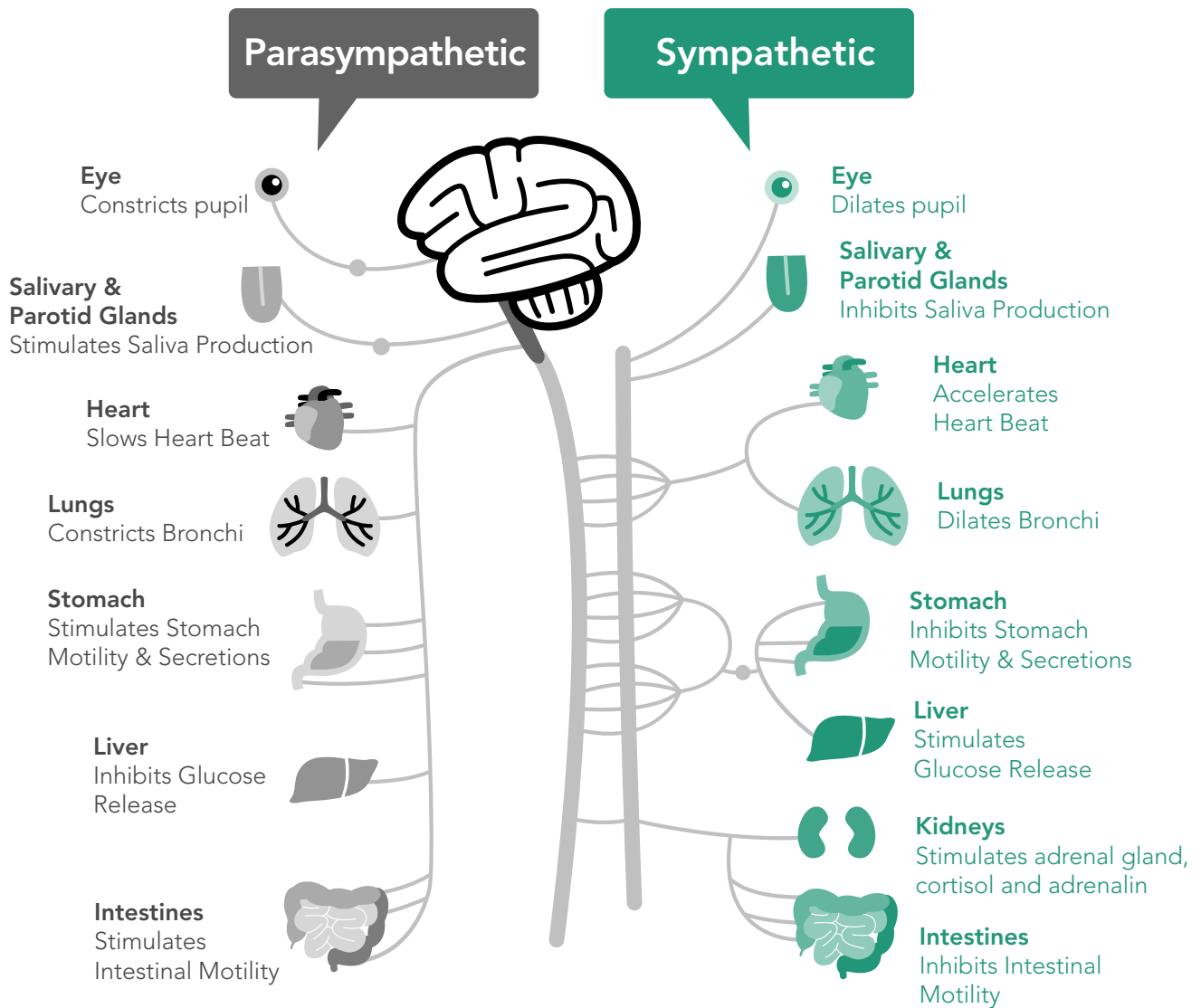
Simple and immediate techniques for helping students return to their resilient zone when they get “bumped out” of that zone.

The Nervous System

The Central and the Peripheral



The Autonomic Nervous System



The Nervous System

Our nervous system is an essential part of our body, and understanding it can be enormously helpful for enhancing our well-being. Our nervous system is made up of our brain and our spinal cord (called the central nervous system) and the network of nerves that connect our brain and spinal cord to the rest of our body, including our internal organs and our senses (called the peripheral nervous system).

A part of our nervous system runs automatically, without the need for conscious control: this is called the autonomic (literally, “self-governing”) nervous system (ANS). Our ANS regulates many body processes necessary for survival, including our heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, and digestion. It also regulates our internal organs such as our stomach, liver, kidneys, bladder, lungs, and salivary glands.

Since our nervous system’s chief function is to help keep us alive, it reacts very quickly to perceived threats or to perceived safety. Our autonomic nervous system has two pathways that activate based on whether we perceive danger (the “fight or flight” response) or safety (the “rest and digest” response). The fight or flight response triggers our sympathetic nervous system, turning off systems of digestion and growth and preparing the body for action and possible injury, while the rest and digest response triggers our parasympathetic nervous system, relaxing the body and allowing for functions like growth, digestion and so on to resume. This is why when we sense danger and have a fight or flight response, we notice changes in our heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, pupil dilation, and our internal organs. Then when we sense that the danger has passed and we are safe again, we notice changes in these same organs.

In modern life, our bodies sometimes react to danger when there is no real threat to our survival, or hold on to a sense of danger after the threat has passed. This leads to a dysregulation of the autonomic nervous system, meaning that its regular alternation between parasympathetic and sympathetic activation is disrupted. This nervous system dysregulation in turn leads to inflammation and a host of other problems. It is one of the main reasons why chronic stress is so damaging to our health and well-being.

Fortunately we can learn to calm our bodies and minds and regulate our nervous system. Since our nervous system is what senses things both on the inside (such as tension, relaxation, heat, cold, pain, and so on) and on the outside through the five senses, it is giving us constant information about the state of our body. This chapter focuses on the information and skills necessary to enhance this type of self-care.

Sensations

The first learning experience, “Exploring Sensations,” helps students build a vocabulary of sensations as a guide to notice the state of our nervous system. Sensations (warmth, coldness, heat, tingling, tightness, etc.) are physical, and are to be distinguished from emotions (sad, angry, happy, jealous), which will be explored later in SEE Learning. Although feelings will be explored later, it is important to note that feelings, thoughts, and beliefs have a corresponding sensation or set of sensations within the body. Learning about sensations helps introduce another portal of understanding to ourselves and our children.

Help Now! Strategies

Learning experience 1 then moves into Help Now! strategies. These are easy actions that can be practiced to quickly return our bodies and minds to the present moment, and thus function as useful ways to bring our bodies back to a place of balance if we get bumped into our high or low zones (states of hyper-arousal or hypo-arousal).

Resourcing

Learning experience 2 “Resourcing” uses the individual kindness drawing created in Chapter 1 as a personal resource. Personal resources are internal, external, or imagined things, unique to each person, that bring about a sense of well-being, safety, or happiness when brought to present moment awareness. When we think of a personal resource (a wonderful memory, a favorite place, a loved one, a joyful activity, a comforting thought), this often brings about pleasant sensations in the body. If we then attend to those sensations consciously and give them a bit of space and time, they can deepen. This increases our nervous system’s sense of safety and brings about an ever greater sense of well-being and relaxation in the body.

Tracking

Noticing sensations and keeping one’s attention on them is called “tracking.” We “track” or “read” sensations, since sensations are the “language” of the nervous system. This leads to body literacy: our understanding of our own body and how it responds to stress and safety. Although we all share the same basic structure of having a nervous system, our bodies react to stress and safety in slightly different ways. We may become tense in different parts of our body. We may also respond to well-being in different ways. We may experience a pleasant warmth in our chest or an opening and loosening in our facial muscles. Learning to track the sensations of our own body helps us understand when we are feeling relaxed, safe, and happy, or if we are having a stress response. This ability opens up “choice” so when we are distressed, we can choose to bring our awareness to

a sensation of well-being or neutrality within the body. This awareness can increase the sense and feeling of well-being.

Note that sensations are not inherently pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral for everyone or at all times: warmth, for example, can be experienced as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral at different times. This is why it's important to ask whether the sensation is pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.

Since tracking can lead to awareness of unpleasant sensations, which can then be triggering, tracking is always done in conjunction with resourcing, grounding, or a Help Now! strategy. The following strategy of "shift and stay" is also important to teach when introducing tracking.

Shift and Stay

Part of tracking is noticing if the sensation is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. If we find pleasant or neutral sensations, resting our attention on that part of the body can sometimes allow the sensation to deepen and allow the body to relax and return to the resilient zone. However, if instead we become aware of an unpleasant sensation, we can "shift and stay." This means to scan our body to find a place that feels better (either neutral or pleasant) and then rest our attention on that new location.

The Resource Kit and Resource Stone

Learning experience 3 "Creating a Resource Kit" builds on previous experiences by helping the students build up a personal "tool box" of personal resources that can be called upon whenever necessary. It then reinforces the skills of resourcing and tracking.

Grounding

Learning experience 4 "Grounding" introduces the practice of grounding. Grounding is noticing the physical contact our body has with things, including things we touch or how we are standing or sitting. Grounding can be a very helpful tool for calming the body and mind. Typically, we have already unconsciously developed a number of grounding techniques that help us feel relaxed, secure, safe, and better. These may include things like sitting in a certain way, folding our arms in a certain way, holding objects we like, lying a certain way on a couch or in bed, and so on. However, we may not be aware of intentionally using these to calm our bodies and return to our resilient zone. Practicing grounding introduces new techniques and makes conscious ones that we have already developed, thereby making them more accessible when we need them.

The Three Zones

Learning experience 5 “The Resilient Zone” introduces the “three zones” as a way of understanding how our body (and specifically our autonomic nervous system) operates. The three zones are the high zone, the low zone, and the resilient zone (or zone of well-being). Understanding this model can be very helpful for both teachers and students.

In this model, our body can be in one of three zones. Our resilient zone is our zone of well-being, where we feel calm and alert, and where we feel more in control and better able to make good decisions. Although we can go up and down in this zone and may feel a bit excited or have slightly less energy, our judgment is not impaired and our body is not in a state of harmful stress. Here our autonomic nervous system is in homeostasis, which can be defined as a stable physiological equilibrium. It is able to alternate between sympathetic and parasympathetic activation properly.

Sometimes we get bumped out of our resilient zone by life events. When this happens, our autonomic nervous system becomes dysregulated. If we get stuck in our high zone, we are in a state of hyper-arousal. We may feel anxious, angry, nervous, agitated, afraid, manic, frustrated, “amped up,” or otherwise out of control. Physiologically we may experience shaking, rapid and shallow breathing, headaches, nausea, tightness in our muscles, indigestion, and changes to vision and hearing.

If we get stuck in the low zone, we experience the effects of hypo-arousal. This can have us feeling lethargic, exhausted, lacking in energy, and not wanting to get out of bed or be active. We may feel isolated or lonely, numb, checked out, unmotivated, lacking in optimism, or uninterested in activities that we would normally enjoy. It’s important to note that since the high zone and low zone are both states of dysregulation, they are not opposites of each other: they may share physiological characteristics and when we are dysregulated we may bounce between high and low zones.

In learning experience 6, students will learn about these three zones through scenarios and then will give advice to each other on how to return to their resilient zone, based on the skills they have already learned (resourcing, grounding, tracking, and the Help Now! strategies).

Being able to monitor the state of our body is essential to our well-being and happiness because our autonomic nervous system can short-circuit other parts of our brain (harming decision making and bypassing executive function). When we learn to remain in our resilient zone there are many health benefits for our body, including being able to maintain peace of mind and greater control over our behavior and our emotional reactions.

Learning experience 7 “How Compassion and Safety Affect the Body” connects this chapter back to Chapter 1 and the themes of happiness, kindness, and the class agreements. Now that students know about the important role that their bodies play in their well-being and happiness, they can better understand why it is important to show kindness and consideration to one another. They begin to learn that being mean or inconsiderate of one another leads to stress and our bodies respond to that stress in unpleasant ways, hindering our ability to be happy. Students can explore the idea that since we are constantly relating to one another and share the same space, we can play a positive role in helping each other remain in our resilient zones, or return to them if we become out of balance.

In some cases, the activities in this chapter may not instantly yield the results and insights you wish. Don't be discouraged, as it is often hard even for adults to notice and describe sensations at first. It may take repeating some of the activities a few times before your students are able to describe sensations, notice if they are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, and use the skills of resourcing and grounding. Even if they do gain insights quickly, repetition is key in order for the skills to become embodied. Eventually, some of the students may begin practicing the skills spontaneously, particularly when facing challenging or stressful circumstances.

Many of these skills were developed through trauma and resiliency work and they are based on a significant body of clinical and scientific research. It is possible that while exploring sensations of the body with your students, some of them will have difficult experiences that you may not be able to deal with sufficiently on your own, especially if they have suffered or are suffering from trauma. Help Now! Strategies can be suggested to the child in the immediate aftermath of an unexpected reaction. If you have counselors or school psychologists, or a wise administrator or colleague, we encourage you to seek assistance and further counsel as necessary. However, the approach taken in SEE Learning is a resiliency-based approach that focuses on the strengths of individual students, not on treating trauma. These are general wellness skills that can be beneficial to anyone, regardless of their level of experience of trauma. Students will be in a good position to explore the next elements of SEE Learning: cultivating attention and developing emotional awareness when they have more of an ability to regulate their nervous systems.

Check-ins and Repeated Practice

From Chapter 2 onwards, the importance of practice becomes even more important in SEE Learning. You will note that the check-ins for this chapter build, each incorporating skills and material covered in preceding Learning Experiences. Feel free to select which check-ins work best for your class and then use them on a regular basis even when you are not doing a full session of SEE

Learning. Although the Learning Experiences include “Reflective Practice” sections for developing embodied understanding, the repetition of the check-ins and the repetition of insight activities (with modifications as you see fit) will greatly aid this process of helping students internalize what they are learning to the point where it becomes second-nature.

Time and Pacing

Each Learning Experience is designed to be a minimum of 30 minutes. It is recommended that you take longer than this if time allows and if your students are capable of it, spending more time on the activities and reflective practices especially. If you have less than 30 minutes, you can choose to only do one of the activities or a part of the activity, and finish the Learning Experience in the following session. However, remember that check-ins and insight activities are important to include regardless of time.

Student Personal Practice

This is the stage in SEE Learning where it’s important to recognize that your students may be beginning their own personal practice, even in an informal way. As you support them in this, it’s helpful to recognize that each student is different, and that images, sounds, and activities that may be calming for some students can be activating for others. Even things such as the sound of a bell, an image of a cute animal, yoga postures, long moments of silence, or sitting and taking long breaths may be experienced as unpleasant by some of your students and may actually hinder their ability to be calm rather than promote it. You’ll come to know this by watching your students and by asking them what they like, and then by giving them options so that they can develop a personal practice around what works best for them.

Teacher Personal Practice

Naturally, teaching your students these practices will be strengthened by your own familiarity with them. It is recommended that, if possible, you first try these practices on your own and with colleagues, friends and family as you are able. The more experiential knowledge you have, the easier it will be to do these exercises with your students. All the practices suggested in this chapter can also be done with older children and adults.

Further Reading and Resources

Content for the learning experiences in this chapter has been adapted from the work of Elaine Miller-Karas and the Trauma Resource Institute with their kind permission. Teachers interested in learning more about the content and skills presented in this chapter are encouraged to read the book *Building Resilience to Trauma: The Trauma and Community Resiliency Models* (2015) by Elaine Miller-Karas, and to visit www.traumaresourceinstitute.com

Also recommended is Bessel van der Kolk's book *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (2015).

Letter to Parents and Caregivers



Date: _____

Dear Parent or Caregiver,

This letter is to inform you that your child is now starting **SEE Learning, Chapter 2, "Building Resilience"**. You may remember that SEE Learning is a K-12 educational program created by Emory University to enrich young people's social, emotional, and ethical development.

In Chapter 2, your child will learn a variety of methods for regulating their nervous system to enhance resilience to stress and adversity. This involves developing greater skill in noticing sensations in the body that signal well-being or distress (called "tracking") and learning simple strategies that can calm the body down. These techniques come from a significant body of research on the role that the autonomic nervous system plays in stress physiology. Your child, however, will be encouraged to use and practice only those skills that work effectively for him or her.

Home Practice

Many of the skills your child will learn in this chapter are skills you can explore yourself, and are just as applicable to adults as they are to children. You are encouraged to talk to your child about how you notice stress in your body and what signs your body gives you when you are experiencing stress as opposed to well-being. It may also be useful to discuss what kinds of healthy strategies you use to keep yourself resilient and which strategies are most appropriate for different situations or settings. Feel free to ask your child to share the techniques they are learning or to demonstrate them for you.

Early Chapters Included

Chapter 1 explored the concepts of kindness and compassion and how they relate to happiness and well-being.

Further Reading and Resources

Building Emotional Intelligence: Practices to Cultivate Inner Resilience in Children by Linda Lantieri. Introduction by Daniel Goleman.

SEE Learning resources are available on the web at: www.compassion.emory.edu.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

Teacher/Educator Signature

Teacher/Educator Printed Name: _____

Teacher/Educator Contact Info: _____



Center for
Contemplative Science and
Compassion-Based Ethics

EMORY UNIVERSITY

Exploring Sensations

PURPOSE

This first learning experience explores sensations and helps students build a vocabulary to describe them, since sensations tell us most directly about the state of our nervous system. Students will also learn Help Now! strategies, most of which involve sensing things around the room. Help Now! strategies

(developed by Elaine Miller-Karas and the Trauma Resource Institute) are immediate tools to help students return to a regulated body state if they are stuck in a dysregulated state, such as being overly agitated. They also are a great way to introduce the concept of sensations and practice attending to them.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Develop and list vocabulary of words that describe various sensations.
- Practice attending to external sensations while learning Help Now! strategies for regulating the body.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Attention & Self-Awareness

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- A piece of chart paper or a board for creating a list of words that describe sensations
- Print outs of the Help Now! Strategies (optional)
- Markers

LENGTH

30 minutes

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“Welcome. As you think about this whole day until now - from when you first woke up to being in class right now, raise your hand if you can think of something kind or compassionate that you experienced or did for someone. Would anyone like to share?”*
- *Have any of you been practicing compassion by using the class agreements? Which ones? What did that feel like?*
- *Have you seen anyone else practice one of the agreements? Describe it. What did it feel like to see that?*
- *What do you think might happen if we keep practicing compassion with each other?”*

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 10 minutes

What Are Sensations?

Overview

In this presentation you will help your students understand what a sensation is and then have them come up with a list of words that describe sensations, thereby building a shared vocabulary of sensation words.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Just as we can sense things on the outside with our five senses, we can pay attention to sensations inside our bodies also.
- Sensations can be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.
- There are simple strategies we can use to help our bodies become calmer and feel safer.

Materials Required

- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Markers

Instructions

- Review the five senses and talk about what we use them for. Discuss the nervous system and how senses are related to it. Discuss the concept of sensations.
- Make a list of sensation words with the students.
 - If they say things like “I feel good!” which is a feeling but not a specific sensation, then encourage them to put that into sensation words by asking, “And what does good feel like in the body?” or “Where in the body do you sense that?” It is all right if some of the words they come up with are not precisely sensation words, as the activities that follow will help them further develop their understanding of what a sensation is.

Teaching Tips

- **A sensation** is a physical feeling that arises in the body, such as warm, cold, tingling, loosening, tightening, heaviness, lightness, openness, and so on. Physical sensation words are to be differentiated from general feeling words like good, bad, stressed, relieved, and so on, and they are also different from emotion words like happy, sad, afraid, excited, and so on. Helping your students come up with a list of sensation words will help them recognize sensations in the body, which in turn will help them monitor the state of their bodies.

- If you feel comfortable doing so, it is also recommended that you introduce your students to the role of the **nervous system**: the part of our body that allows us to feel sensations on the inside as well as sense things on the outside (through our five senses, for example) and that keeps us alive by regulating our breathing, our heart rate, blood flow, digestion and other important functions. This whole chapter involves coming to understand the nervous system (specifically the autonomic nervous system). You can teach the content and skills without naming the nervous system specifically and instead using the general term “the body,” but if you are able to bring in additional information about the autonomic nervous system gradually, this will likely enrich your students’ overall understanding.

Sample Script

- *“We’ve been exploring compassion and happiness. Today we’re going to learn about how about how our senses can help us know what our bodies are feeling.*
- *Who can name one or more of the five senses?*
- *Those are for feeling things on the outside: we can see, hear, smell, touch and taste things.*
- *What are things we can sense on the outside through our five senses? Let’s think about one of our senses—hearing—let’s take a moment of silence and notice what sounds we can hear during a minute of silence. What did you hear? Can anyone share what you are sensing*

right now using one of the other senses? What about seeing? Touch? Smell?

- *There is a part of our bodies that help us sense these things on the outside of our bodies and also inside our bodies. We call it the nervous system.*
- *It is called the nervous system because our body is full of nerves that send information from different parts of our bodies to and from our brain. We’re going to be learning some interesting things about our nervous system that can help us be happier and healthier together.*
- *So, our senses help us feel things on the outside of our bodies like a sound or smell. Let’s notice if we can feel anything inside our bodies. Let’s put one hand on our heart and the other hand on our belly and let’s close our eyes for a moment and notice if we can feel anything inside our body.*
- *Sometimes we can feel something in our bodies like whether we are feeling hot or cold. We call things like that sensations. That’s because we sense them.*
- *Sensing something is feeling something with our body. Sensations are just things we can feel or sense with our body. Our body tells us what we are sensing.*
- *Let’s think of things we can sense on the outside. We will make a list of sensations together.*
- *When you touch your desk, is it hard? Is it soft? Is the temperature warm or cool?*

- *If you touch your clothing, is it soft? Scratchy? Smooth? Something else?*
- *Take out your pencil/crayon/pen, as you touch it, is it round? Flat? Warm? Cool? Sharp? Something else?*
- *Is there something else on your desk/near you that you want to describe with sensation words?*
- *Now let's think about what we sense on the inside. An example would be if we are standing in the sun, our senses may let us know it is too hot, and we take action to move into the shade to cool down. In the beginning, we sense the warmth or the heat on the inside and when we move to the shade, we sense a cooling down on the inside. Let's think together about other sensations we experience on the inside.*
- *Let's see how many we can come up with. If you say something but we're maybe not sure if it's a sensation, I'm going to write it separately over here."*
- *(Some children may need further prompting to understand sensations. Hence asking questions like the following may help:) "What do you feel on the inside when you're sleepy? What part of your body tells you that you are sleepy? How about when you're hungry? What do you feel like when you are having fun? What do you feel on the inside when you're happy? If you play a sport, what do you feel like on the inside? What do you feel on the inside when you're excited? Where*

in your body do you feel that? (It may be helpful if you give a personal example, such as when I'm thinking about having fun, I sense warmth in my shoulders and cheeks.)"

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 12 minutes

Sensing on the Outside and Inside*

Overview

- This activity is to help students continue to recognize that we can sense things on the outside (using our five senses) and on the inside (turning our awareness inside, noticing and naming what sensations we find inside the body).
- The Community Resiliency Model, designed by the Trauma Resource Institute, provides several activities called "Help Now!" strategies. These all involve doing an easy cognitive task or directing our attention to sensations. It has been found that when the nervous system is agitated, directing attention to sensations by doing activities like these can have an immediate calming effect on the body. This insight activity works through the individual Help Now! strategies and also lays the foundation for cultivating attention as a skill (which is further developed later in SEE Learning), since all the Help Now! strategies involve paying attention.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Just as we can sense things on the outside with our five senses, we can pay attention to sensations inside our bodies also.

- Sensations can be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.
- There are simple strategies we can use to help our bodies become calmer and feel safer

Materials Required

- Optional: copies of the stations handout if you are doing stations
- Help Now! strategies posters (both items are included at the end of this learning experience)

Instructions

- Select a Help Now! strategy to lead your class through. Follow the script below in order to get comfortable asking questions about sensations. Show the poster of the Help Now! strategy to your class.
- Use this format to explore the various Help Now! strategies as you have time, and repeat this activity as necessary.
- Note: You can also have students explore the Help Now! strategies as stations around the room. Use the handouts provided in the following section or make your own and post them around the room. Have your students pair up and then walk around the room until they find a Help Now! station that they want to try. Then they can do the Help Now! skill together as a pair and share what they experience. After everyone has had a chance to try two or more stations, bring them back together as a class and ask them to share which stations they did and what they experienced.

Teaching Tips

- As students explore the effects of these strategies on their bodies, it is important that they also learn to notice whether the sensations they experience are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. As this vocabulary (pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral) and the ability to connect these terms to sensations in the body will be important for all learning experiences in this chapter, it is worth checking in occasionally with your students to deepen their understanding of noticing sensations in this three-fold way. Note that sensations are not inherently pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral for everyone or at all times: warmth, for example, can be experienced as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral at different times.
- Note that not every Help Now! strategy will work for every student. Some may prefer to push against a wall, some may prefer to lean against a wall. Some may like touching pieces of furniture around them, some may not. **An important part of the process here is for each student to learn what works for himself or herself, while you as the teacher also learn what works for each individual student. This is the building of body literacy—a knowledge of one’s own body and how it experiences well-being and distress. Even something that works one time may not be effective another time, so learning a variety of strategies is best.**
- Once your students have had some familiarity practicing Help Now! strategies, you can also

have them illustrate their own Help Now! stations and place them around the room.

Please see the complete list of the Help Now! Strategies listed on the handout on the next page. Below is a sample script of how you can lead the activity to explore a few of them at a time.

Sample script

- *“Remember we said we want to feel happy and we want to experience kindness.*
- *Our bodies can feel happy or unhappy too. If we pay attention to that, we can do things that feel kind to our bodies.*
- *We’re going to try a few sensing activities and see if we notice anything happening to our bodies.*
- *We’ll start with sensing things on the outside.*
- *Let’s all listen and see if we can hear three things inside this room. Listen and then raise your hand when you have three things that you heard inside this room. (Wait until all or most of the students have raised their hand.)*
- *Let’s share now. What three things did you notice? (Call on individual students to share).*
- *Now let’s see if we can hear three things outside of this room. Raise your hand when you’ve got three things that you heard outside this room.” (Note: This exercise can also be accomplished with music. You can play music and ask the students what happens on the inside as they listen to music.)*
- *(When most or all students have raised their hands, allow them to share.)*
- *“What happened to our bodies when we all listened for sounds inside and outside the room? What did you notice?” (Allow for sharing. You may notice that when you are all listening for sounds, you become quieter and more still.)*
- *“Now we’re going to notice what happens inside our bodies when we do this.*
- *Our sensations can be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. There are no right or wrong sensations. Sensations exist to give us information like I am too hot in the sun, I need to walk to that shade to cool down. Neutral means in-between. It means that the sensation isn’t pleasant, but it isn’t unpleasant either.*
- *Let’s listen for things inside or outside this classroom that we didn’t notice before. [Pause.]*
- *When we’re doing this, what do you notice on the inside of your body as you’re listening? Do you notice any sensations inside your body right now? Raise your hand if you notice a sensation inside your body.*
- *What do you notice? Where is it? Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral? [Allow other students to share.]*
- *Now let’s see if we can find things of a certain color in the room. Let’s start with red.*
- *Look around the room and see if you can find three red things in this room.*

- *Notice what you're feeling on the inside as you find the color red. Does anyone notice any sensations in their bodies? Raise your hand if you noticed one.*
- *What is it? Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?"*

Use this format to explore the various Help Now! strategies as you have time, and repeat this activity as necessary.

DEBRIEF | 4 minutes

- *"What are some things you learned today about sensations?"*
- *What are some words that describe sensations?"*
- *How can knowing a little more about the idea of sensations help us be happier and kinder? When do you think it might be useful to use one of these Help Now! activities?"*
- *Let's remember what we've learned and see if we can use it together next time."*

Strategy	What Sensations Do You Notice in Your Body?	Are the Sensations Pleasant, Unpleasant, or Neutral?
Name six colors you notice in the room.		
Count backwards from 10.		
Notice different 3 sounds in the room and 3 outside of the room.		
Slowly drink a glass of water. Feel it in your mouth and throat.		
Spend a minute walking around the room. Notice the feeling of your feet on the ground.		
Press your palms together firmly or rub your palms together until they get warm.		
Touch a piece of furniture or a surface near you. Notice its temperature and texture.		
Slowly push against a wall with your hands or your back and notice any feelings in your muscles.		
Look around the room and notice what catches your attention.		

Help Now! Strategy

Station 1



Slowly drink a glass of water.
Feel it in your mouth and throat.

What do you notice on the inside?
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?

Help Now! Strategy

Station 2



Name six colors you see.

What do you notice on the inside?
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?

Help Now! Strategy

Station 3



Look around the room and notice what catches your attention.

What do you notice on the inside?
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?

Help Now! Strategy

Station 4



Count backwards from 10 as you walk around the room.

What do you notice on the inside?
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?

Help Now! Strategy

Station 5



Touch a piece of furniture or a surface near you. Notice its temperature and texture.

What do you notice on the inside?
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?

Help Now! Strategy

Station 6



Press your palms together firmly or rub your palms together until they get warm.

What do you notice on the inside?
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?

Help Now! Strategy

Station 7



Notice the 3 sounds within the room
and 3 sounds outside.

What do you notice on the inside?
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?

Help Now! Strategy

Station 8



Walk around the room.
Notice the feeling of your feet on the
ground.

What do you notice on the inside?
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?

Help Now! Strategy

Station 9



Slowly push your hands or back against a wall or door.

What do you notice on the inside?
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?

Resourcing

PURPOSE

The purpose of this learning experience is to help students explore the use of a personal resource (in this case, the kindness drawings created in Chapter 1) to bring about greater well-being in the body. Personal resources are internal, external, or imagined things that serve to bring about sensations of greater well-being in the body. They are unique to each person. Thinking about a personal resource tends to bring sensations of well-being to the body.

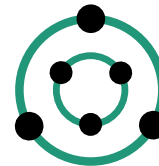
When we notice these sensations (tracking) and then focus upon pleasant or neutral sensations, the body tends to relax and return to its resilient zone (which students will learn about later). Both resourcing and tracking are skills that develop over time and lead to what can be called *body literacy*, since we are learning about our own bodies and how they respond to stress and well-being.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Discover how to use a personal resource to relax and calm the body.
- Develop greater skill in identifying and tracking sensations in the body.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Self-Regulation

LENGTH

30 minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

The drawings of kindness that students created in Chapter 1. If you do not have those drawings, you can have them create new ones, but this will take additional time.

CHECK-IN | 5 minutes

- *“Let’s practice some of the Help Now! activities that we learned. (You may wish to have pictures of the Help Now! activities up to allow students to pick one of them.)*
- *Let’s listen and see if we can hear three things inside this room.*
- *Now let’s listen and see if we can hear three things outside this room.*
- *What do we notice on the inside as we do that? Do you notice a pleasant or neutral sensation? Remember, neutral means in-between.*
- *Look around the room, and see what catches your attention that is pleasant or neutral, it could be an object, a color, a favorite friend, or something else.*
- *Now let’s check-in with our bodies. What do you notice on the inside? Can you find a pleasant or neutral sensation in your body?*
- *Is there anyone that can’t find a pleasant or neutral sensation? If so, raise your hand. (If some students raise their hands, help them shift to a place in their body that feels better.)*
- *Once you’ve found a pleasant or neutral sensation, let’s just pay attention to that place quietly for a moment. See if the sensation changes or if it stays the same.”*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 20 minutes

Using the Compassion Drawing as a Personal Resource

Overview

In this activity, students share their drawing and then notice sensations in their body, paying particular attention to pleasant and neutral sensations.

Content/Insights to be Explored:

- Sensations can be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral; the same sensation (such as warmth) could be any of these three
- When we focus on pleasant or neutral sensations, our bodies tend to relax.
- We can use resources and attention to sensations to relax our bodies.

Materials Required

The drawings of compassion that students created in Chapter 1.

Instructions

Follow the script below to facilitate resourcing for the first time.

Teaching Tips:

- Bringing to mind something that evokes greater well-being, safety, or security is called “resourcing.” The object that one brings to mind is called a personal resource. Noticing the sensations that arise is called “tracking” the sensations or “reading” them (you can use whichever term you prefer). When a pleasant or neutral sensation is found through

tracking, we can keep our attention on that sensation for several moments and observe the sensation, seeing if it stays the same or changes. This tends to deepen the sensation and lead to greater relaxation in the body.

- Although we all have nervous systems, there can be great variety in terms of what functions as a personal resource for us and what sensations arise in us related to well-being or stress. If tracking leads us to noticing unpleasant sensations, we can try to find a place in the body that feels better, and focus on that instead. This is called “shift and stay.” When we do find a pleasant or neutral sensation in the body through tracking, we can keep our attention on it for a few moments. As noted, this silent attention tends to deepen the experience and signals to the body that we are safe, and the body typically responds with relaxation.
- It’s possible that during resourcing, the students will share sensations that are coming from things other than the kindness drawing. For example, the student may feel nervous speaking up and may describe sensations related to that. If that happens, you can redirect the student back to the compassion drawing and see if that evokes any pleasant or neutral sensations. If the student does report a pleasant sensation, then ask them to pause for a moment and just notice that sensation. It is this pausing and staying aware of the pleasant or neutral sensation that allows the body to relax and deepen into an experience of safety. If the student reports unpleasant sensations,

ask if there is somewhere else in the body that feels better, then allow them to pause and notice that place that feels better.

- Note: A single sensation (like warmth, for example) can be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. Coolness similarly can be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. So it is helpful to ask the students specifically whether the sensation is pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral so that they begin to learn the skill of tracking in this way. Also note that the nervous system responds to stimuli very quickly. So if you wait too long when the student is sharing their kindness drawing, their attention will have moved on to something else, and they will no longer be experiencing sensations related to recalling a moment of compassion. The timing of this will become more apparent to you with practice

Sample script

- *“Remember how we said we all like compassion?”*
- *We’re going to explore how looking at or thinking about something we like can lead to sensations in the body.*
- *Does anyone remember what we call the part of our body that senses things and sends information to our brain? That’s right—the nervous system. We’re going to learn more about that now.*
- *Sensations can be pleasant, unpleasant, or they can be neither. If they are not pleasant and not unpleasant, we say they are “neutral” or “in between.”*

- *What sensations do you think could be pleasant or unpleasant or in-between?*
- *How about warmth? What's it like when it's pleasant? Unpleasant? In-between?*
- *Or coolness?*
- *Or having lots of energy and movement inside our bodies? What's it like when we have that and it's pleasant? Have you ever felt that but it was unpleasant? Could it be in-between and neutral?*
- *Now let's take out our compassion drawing that we made.*
- *Take a moment to look at your compassion drawing. Remember what it was about.*
- *If you like, see what catches your eye on your drawing, and touch the part that catches your eye.*
- *Are the sensations pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral? Is there a difference between looking and touching your kindness drawing?*
- *Who would like to share their compassion drawing with the rest of us?*
- *It's important that when one of us shares, everyone else is going to listen and watch quietly."*

Allow one child at a time to share. After the child has shared, ask them immediately (waiting too long will allow the sensations to pass):

- *"What do you notice on the inside right now as you remember that moment of compassion?*
- *Are there any sensations you notice in your body?*
- *Is that sensation you just told me about pleasant, unpleasant, or in between?*
- *What other sensations do you notice in your body as you remember the moment of kindness?*
- *Would anyone like to share?"*

As an option, you can allow them to share other things that make them feel happy, safe, or good, besides their compassion drawing.

- *"If you'd rather choose something else to think of instead of your compassion drawing, you can think of a person, place, an animal, a thing, or memory that makes you feel good and share that."*

Allow a few students to share and go through the same process with each one. It's possible that as one student shares and experiences pleasant sensations, there may be noticeable changes in their body associated with relaxation. Other students may notice this. If they do, allow them to share what physical changes they noticed.

Once you have modeled this process two or more times, you can have the children form pairs and share with each other.

DEBRIEF | 5 minutes

- *“What did we discover about personal resources and sensations?”*
 - *What kinds of sensations came when we looked at our personal resources?*
 - *Where in our bodies did we feel those sensations?*
 - *Do you think we could come up with more personal resources in the future?*
 - *If you ever feel unpleasant, do you think you could use one of your personal resources to help your body feel better?”*
-

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Writing

- Write about a time when you resourced using a positive/kind memory or when you used a Help Now! strategy and what the positive or neutral sensations felt like in your body.

Creating a Resource Kit

PURPOSE

This learning experience builds on the last activity by helping students create a “resource kit” (or tool kit or treasure chest, as elementary students may call it) of personal resources. Personal resources are internal, external, or imagined things that serve to bring about sensations of greater well-being in the body. They are unique to each person. Thinking about a personal resource tends to bring

sensations of well-being to the body. It is good to have more than one resource, because a particular resource might not work all the time. For example, some resources might serve to energize us when we are feeling down, while others might calm us when we’re feeling hyperactive. It is important to practice resourcing along with tracking, since it is the tracking skill that builds body literacy.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Create a resource kit of personal resources that they can use to calm themselves when stressed.
- Discover how to use their personal resources to relax and calm the body.
- Develop greater skill in identifying and tracking sensations in the body.

LENGTH

30 minutes (40 with optional activity)

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Self-Regulation

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- The compassion drawings from Chapter 1
- Colored or white blank 4”x 6” cards (or paper cut to a similar size) and colored pens or markers for each student
- Small box, pouch, or a large colored envelope to serve as the “resource kit” for each student to store their drawings of personal resources in
- A box of small colored rocks, stones, crystals, or other similar objects (optional)
- Art supplies for decorating the resource kit (optional)

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

Distribute the compassion drawings from the previous learning experience to each student.

- *“Let’s take a moment to get comfortable as we take out the compassion drawings we did a few days ago.*
- *Look around the room, and see what catches your attention that is pleasant or neutral, it could be an object, a color, a favorite friend, or something else.*
- *Bring your attention to a place on the inside that feels pleasant or neutral.*
- *Now let’s think of our moment of compassion or the drawing of a resource. (Pause.) Take a look at your drawing and see if you can remember what the act of compassion or resource was that you drew, where you were, or who you were with.*
- *When you think about this moment of kindness or resource, what do you notice happening the inside your body? (If students share pleasant or neutral sensations, allow them to sit with their attention on those sensations. If they share unpleasant sensations, encourage them to shift and stay, or to choose one of the Help Now! activities.*
- *As we do this, we’re learning about our bodies and how to calm them and make them feel okay.”*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 16 minutes

Creating a Resource Kit of Personal Resources*

Overview

In this activity students will come to understand what a personal resource is: something specific to them that makes them feel good or better when they think of it. They create a set of personal resources for themselves, drawing each one on a piece of paper and then labeling it. The pieces of paper can be small so that they can be folded and placed in a box (or colored envelope) which will serve as a resource kit of the student’s personal resources. If you or your students prefer, you can call the resource kit something else, like a “pouch of resources,” “tool box” or “tool kit.” (Similarly, you can provide pouches instead of boxes.) As the year goes on, they can add to their resource kit of personal resources and they can pull resources from it when they need to.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We can develop and use a variety of resources to help the body feel calmer and safer.
- Our nervous systems respond when we think of things we like and enjoy or things that make us feel safer.
- Some resources may work better at certain times than others.
- Resourcing can become easier with practice.

Materials Required

- Colored or white blank 4”x 6” cards (or paper cut to a similar size) and colored pens or markers for each student; small box, pouch,

or a large colored envelope to serve as the “resource kit” for each student to store their drawings of personal resources in; a box of small colored rocks, stones, crystals, or other similar objects (optional); art supplies for decorating the treasure chest (optional)

Instructions

- Tell students you are going to make a resource kit and explain to students what resources are.
- Ask questions to get students to share some of their resources.
- Provide ample time for students to draw their resources and then share them. Sharing can be done in pairs or as a whole group or both.

Teaching Tips

- What’s important in this learning experience is students identifying what serves as a personal resource for them, that is, recognizing the value of something in their life as a resource that makes them feel good or better. Although we all have things in our lives (people, places, activities, memories, hopes, etc) that make us feel better, we sometimes take them for granted or don’t recognize them as having this special value.
- You may wish to repeat this activity to create more resources. Also, you can set aside time for your students to decorate and personalize their resource kit, thereby making it individualized. In this way, their resource kit itself may come to serve as a resource for them. You can also use the following

supplemental insight activity (“resource stone”) to add to the resource kit.

- *Note:* Personal resources can be quite simple; they do not have to be something incredibly wonderful. Personal resources are also unique to the individual; what works for one person will often not work for someone else. To keep the range as broad as possible at first, use a variety of words to describe what a personal resource can be rather than a single word like “happiness,” “safety,” “joy,” etc. That will make it easier for your students to find something that works for them.

Sample Script

- *“Today we’re going to create a resource kit. It’s like a tool kit.*
- *What’s a tool kit for? What kind of things do you find in a tool kit?*
- *In this kit we’re going to put reminders of things that make us feel good, things that make us feel safe, or things we like.*
- *We call these things personal resources. A resource means something that is useful. It’s personal because our resource is something special to us. It doesn’t have to be special to other people.*
- *Personal resources are things that make us feel good or happy or safe.*
- *They can be things we like to do. They can be things we find relaxing or fun. They can be people we like. They can even be things about ourselves - things we’re proud of or happy about.*

- *Is there someone you like who makes you feel safer and happier when you think of them?*
- *Is there a place you like that makes you feel better when you go there or think about it?*
- *Is there something you really like to do that is fun?*
- *These are all personal resources. It can be anything that makes you feel good or makes you feel better when you're not feeling good.*
- *It can even be something that you imagine that makes you feel good or happy when you think of it.*
- *Let's take a moment to think of a personal resource for ourselves, it might be two or three.*
- *Now let's take a moment to draw our resource or resources.*
- *Let's write down the name of our resource on the drawing so we can remember what we drew later.*
- [Allow students ample time to draw.]
- *Now we've created a few personal resources. Each one is like a treasure. It's valuable. Like treasure, we can save it for later and we can use it when we want to.*
- *We can keep our resources in our resource kits. Let's write our names on our treasure chests.*
- *Let's share what we made with each other. Who would like to share one of your resources and why it is a resource for you?"*

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 7 minutes

Practicing Resourcing and Tracking*

Overview

In this reflective practice, students will choose one of their personal resources and sit with it for a moment, seeing if they can notice sensations in the body and identify them as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral (in-between).

Teaching Tips

- Note that if students share unpleasant sensations, remind them that they can shift to a place in their body that feels better or even just neutral. This skill is called "shift and stay." Also, remember that you are helping them to learn what a sensation is, so if they say things like "It feels good" or "It feels bad," ask them things like, "What does good feel like? Can you describe the sensation?" You can use the sensation word list that you created with them in the previous learning experience.
- Resourcing is a skill that will take time to develop. It is suggested that you repeat this activity a few times until students gain some direct experience with pleasant sensations in the body while thinking of their personal resource. After such critical insight is born, further practice will then lead to an embodied understanding of the way their own nervous system experiences and expresses stress and well-being.

Sample script

- *"Now we're going to notice sensations in our bodies. (Review what a sensation is with examples if necessary).*

- *Let's take a moment and choose one of your favorite resources.*
- *Make yourself comfortable and place the drawing of your resource in front of you.*
- *If you feel that you are distracted, move to a place where you are less distracted.*
- *Let's take a moment and be still and just look at our resource and think about it.*
- *What does it feel like on the inside when we look at and think about our resource?*
- *Do you notice any pleasant sensations? If you don't, that's okay.*
- *If you notice unpleasant sensations, then just shift and find another part of your body that feels better. Stay with the place that feels better.*
- *Once we've found a pleasant sensation, or just an in-between sensation, then we can stay there and just feel that sensation. [Pause.]*
- *It's like we're reading our body and its sensations. We call this tracking. Tracking means to follow something closely. When we notice the sensations in the body and pay attention to them, we are tracking.*
- *Would anyone like to share a sensation that they notice in their body?*
- *What does it feel like when you just pay attention to that sensation?"*

DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- *"These resource kits are for you to use to help you whenever you need to feel more safe, calm, and peaceful.*
- *Whenever you feel you need some help feeling calmer, you can take a few moments and touch your stone quietly, and remember something you're thankful for. Or look at your pictures of your resources.*
- *What kinds of sensations came when we looked at our personal resources?*
- *Do you think we could come up with more personal resources in the future?*
- *When might you want to use your resource kit?"*

OPTIONAL INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 10 minutes Resource Stone

Overview

This is an optional supplemental insight activity that can go along with the resource kit activity. You may not have time to do both activities in one lesson, so you can always do this later. In this activity, you invite the students to form a circle and choose a small stone, crystal, or other object from a bag or box. They then think of something they are thankful for, and the stone or object comes to represent that thing. They then add the object to their resource kit.

Materials Required

- A small stone, crystal, or other small item for each student
- Students' treasure chests

Instructions

- Invite the students to join you in a circle.
- Give each student a small crystal, stone, or other small item or invite them to choose one they like from a box or bag. They should choose.
- Lead them through the resourcing practice, scripted below.

Sample script

- *"This is a special treasure for your resource kit.*
- *It is a stone (or crystal) that can help remind you how to feel calm, safe, and peaceful. We'll call it a resource stone, since we will use it to remind us of a resource.*
- *But, before it can do that, we have to practice something new.*
- *Take a moment and think of something that you are thankful for.*
- *It can be one of your personal resources or something new.*
- *We can feel thankful for little things, like a someone giving you a smile, or big things like special people in our lives.*

- *Let's all take a moment and think about something we feel thankful for: a place, a person, an object, or something else.*
- *It could be an adult in your life, a pet, a favorite park. Whatever it is, take a moment to picture it in your mind.*
- *As you think about this special thing, give your stone a gentle squeeze. You can rub it with your fingers too.*
- *Notice what sensations you feel on the inside as you hold your stone and think of what you're thankful for.*
- *Now, we'll go around the circle and share what we're thankful for.*
- *I'll start: "I'm thankful for... (the trees that I see outside, my walk home, my good friends, my cat)."*

Go around the circle until everyone has shared. It's ok to pass.

- *"Notice how you feel on the inside now that we've all expressed thanks for something special to us.*
- *Does anyone notice any sensations on the inside? What do you notice?*
- *Now you can return to your desks (tables) and place your special stone inside your resource kit.*
- *We can write a note and put it in our resource kit also, so that we remember what it is we were thankful for."*

Grounding

PURPOSE

The purpose of this learning experience is to explore the skill of grounding as a way of returning to and staying within the resilient zone/OK zone. Grounding refers to attending to the physical contact of one's body with an object. Grounding is always practiced with tracking (attending to sensations in the body),

as these two together build body literacy. As there are many ways to do grounding, and each student will likely find methods that work best for him or her, it is recommended that you repeat some of the activities in this learning experience a few times.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Increase awareness of how our bodies feel when we move them in certain ways.
- Gain proficiency in the practice of grounding through various postures.
- Gain proficiency in the practice of grounding through holding an object.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Self-Regulation

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Students' resource kits
- A grab bag of objects for students to hold such as stuffed animals/soft toys, articles of clothing, pendants, watches, toys. (If you prefer, or if it is difficult to arrange these items, you can ask students beforehand to bring something that they feel they might enjoy using for this activity.)

LENGTH

30 minutes

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“Let’s take out our resource kits and see if there’s something in there we’d like to use.*
- *Pick one of your personal resources and hold it in your hands or place it in front of you.*
- *Let your eyes rest on it, or close your eyes and feel it carefully with your hands.*
- *Let’s take a few moments to really give our attention to our objects. [Pause.] As you do that, try to notice the sensations inside your body. You might feel warmer or cooler, lighter or heavier, perhaps tingling, maybe you notice your breathing, just be curious. If you don’t notice any sensations, that’s okay and just notice that you’re not feeling any sensations at the moment. You can still just sit and enjoy your object.”*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 12 minutes

Grounding with One’s Stance*

Overview

In this activity students will practice the skill of grounding by trying out different stances and seeing which ones bring about the greatest sense of well-being in their bodies.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Our nervous system responds to the physical contact of our bodies with objects and surfaces.
- Attention to pleasant or neutral sensations in the body when grounding can lead to relaxation.

- We each have specific grounding techniques that will work best for us.
- Practicing grounding can make it easier and more effective over time.

Materials Required

None

Instructions

- You may need to prepare the space first to allow for students to push down on a desk as well as push and lean against a wall.
- Use the script below to guide your students through grounding with one’s stance and tracking for the first time.
- Explain that you will be learning a skill called “grounding” which is to help the body feel better, safer, more secure, and more stable. (In that sense it is quite like resourcing, but instead of thinking of a resource, it involves moving your body until it is most comfortable.)
- Lead your students through different postures (standing, sitting, pushing down on their desk, leaning against the wall, pushing against the wall), pausing briefly during each posture to allow them to track their sensations, and then allowing them to share what sensations (if any) they notice.
- Conclude by allowing them to practice the stance or posture that they like best, and note that they can use stances and postures like this when they need to calm down or help their bodies feel better.

Teaching Tips

- Because our nervous systems constantly monitor the posture of our bodies and the contact of our bodies with objects (including what is supporting us, such as the floor, beds, or chairs), simply changing our stance can help the nervous system regulate itself better. Tracking sensations allows a deepening of the experience and the building of body literacy.
- If you like you can add other postures as well, even including lying down or sitting with one's back against the wall. Arm positions can also be used, such as folding one's arms. Remember to encourage them to use tracking to notice the sensations in their bodies, as this will help them see which postures are most helpful.

Sample script

- *"We can use the sense of touch to practice a skill called "grounding."*
- *We are going to try a little experiment and see if we feel differently depending on what our body is doing. Remember, our nervous systems are all different, so something that feels pleasant for you might feel unpleasant for others. Since we're all sitting now, let's notice the sensations in our bodies that come from sitting. Feel free to change your way of sitting to one that is most comfortable for you. Now let's track our sensations by paying attention to them. [Pause.]*
- *Now let's all stand. Stand in the way that is most comfortable for you.*
- *Let's track what sensations we notice in our body now that we're standing. Let's see what we're feeling on the inside. [Pause.]*
- *Who would like to share? [Allow for student comments on what they are sensing.]*
- *Raise your hand if you feel better standing. Raise your hand if you felt better sitting.*
- *That's interesting, isn't it? Tracking helps us know which feels better for us. It is different for each of us.*
- *What we're doing is called "grounding."*
- *We use grounding to help our bodies feel more safe, strong, secure, or happy.*
- *That's because our nervous system always pays attention to the position of our bodies and what we're touching. It senses what position we are in and it responds to that. It can feel better or not so good depending on how we're standing or what we're touching.*
- *Now that we are paying attention to sensations, we can see if the way we hold our body changes those sensations.*
- *Sometimes by changing the way we are standing or sitting can help us feel better.*
- *Let's try something different. Let's push down on the table with our hands. It doesn't have to be too hard. And let's track what sensations we feel on the inside. [Pause.] (If students are sitting in a circle away from tables, they can place their hands on the bench or floor and push hard to lift themselves up off their seat,*

feeling the contact and also the pressure in their arms.)

- *What sensations do you notice on the inside?* [Allow students to share.]
- *Let's try a different thing. Let's push against the wall with our hands. While we're doing that, let's do tracking. Let's notice what sensations are in our body when we push like this and where in our body we feel those sensations.* [Pause.]
- *What sensations are you noticing?* [Allow students to share.] *Are they pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?*
- *Let's try leaning against the walls with our backs. And let's track while we do this, paying attention to our sensations on the inside.* [Pause.]
- *What sensations are you noticing now?* [Allow students to share.] *Are they pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?*
- *Raise your hand if you felt better pushing against the wall. Raise your hand if you feel better leaning against the wall. Raise your hand if you felt better pushing down on the table or seat.*
- *Now let's each do what we prefer. If you want to sit, do that. Or you can stand, you can push down on the table, you can lean against the wall, or you can push against the wall. Let's all do the one we like best.*
- *Now let's pay attention to the sensations inside our body by tracking. You might*

like to close your eyes to help you feel the sensations.

- *What do you notice? Do we all like the same things?*
- *Did you find one that made you feel better?*
- *When we do this, we learn what feels best for us. We can use this practice of grounding to help our body be calmer if it isn't feeling calm."*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 10 minutes *Grounding with an Object**

Overview

In this activity you will allow your students to choose an object they like from a selection that you provide (or ask them to bring objects of their own) and they will practice holding a few of the objects and noticing what sensations arise in their bodies when they do this.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Our nervous system responds to the physical contact of our bodies with objects and surfaces.
- Attention to pleasant or neutral sensations in the body when grounding can lead to relaxation.
- We each have specific grounding techniques that will work best for us.
- Practicing grounding can make it easier and more effective over time.

Materials Required

A grab bag of objects for students to hold such as stuffed animals/soft toys, articles of clothing, pendants, watches, toys. (If you prefer, or if it is difficult to arrange these items, you can ask students beforehand to bring something that they feel they might enjoy using for this activity).

Instructions

Use the provided script to guide students through grounding with an object and tracking for the first time.

Teaching Tips

- Grounding is the physical contact of our body with an object. This can include the ground, a chair, or the wall, as in the previous activity. But it can also involve holding an object. When we enjoy the sensations that arise from holding an object, attention to those sensations can also help us relax.
- You may wish to have a variety of soft objects or objects with nice textures as well as some hard objects like wooden objects or stones. Students can also use their resource stone from the previous Learning Experience. If you will not have enough objects for them, you can ask them to bring in something from home prior to doing this activity.

Sample script

- *"We can do grounding by holding or touching things also.*

- *Here are some things we can use to practice grounding. You can each choose something you think you might enjoy holding.*
- *Let's sit and hold our object. You can feel it with your hands or place it on your lap.*
- *Notice how it feels.*
- *Can anyone describe their object using sensation words? What does it feel like?*
- *Now let's do tracking. We're going to pay attention to the sensations in our body as we hold our object.*
- *Let's be silent for a moment and notice any sensations in our body as we hold our object. [Pause.]*
- *What did you notice? Where did you notice it in the body?*
- *Let's be silent again and do some more tracking. [Pause.]*
- *What did you notice this time?*
- *Would anyone like to change their object? [Repeat once allowing students to pick a different object if they didn't particularly like their first one.]*
- *This is also grounding."*

After you do this a few times, you may find that some students like particular objects especially and can use them for grounding. If this is the case, you may wish to leave some of these objects in the classroom to allow students to use them for grounding when they feel the need to as it suits your classroom.

OPTIONAL INSIGHT ACTIVITY

10 minutes

Grounding with a Part of the Body*

Overview

This activity is an extension of further ways students can use grounding, in this case by becoming aware of their feet and hands while lightly pressing down on a table, leaning against the wall, sitting, or standing. As in other grounding activities, what is important is to combine grounding with tracking (awareness of sensations in the body).

Sample Script

- *"We can do grounding by becoming aware of a part of our body in relationship to a surface.*
- *Let's try placing our hand(s) against a table, a wall or the floor.*
- *Let's try paying attention to our feet and how they are positioned on the ground.*
- *Now let's do tracking. We are going to pay attention to the sensations in our body.*
- *Let's be silent for a moment and notice any sensations in our body. [Pause.]*
- *What did you notice? Where do you notice it in the body?*
- *Let's be silent again and do some more tracking. [Pause.]*
- *What did you notice this time?*
- *Did you like paying attention to your hands, your feet, or both?*
- *This is also grounding."*

DEBRIEF | 4 minutes

- *"We have spent some time together trying out different ways of grounding ourselves and noticing sensations within our bodies. Which has been the best one for you (i.e. which has given you pleasant or neutral sensations)? Which one did not work for you?*
- *Does anyone remember a sensation that they felt or heard someone else share?*
- *When do you think you could use grounding?"*

The Resilient Zone

PURPOSE

The purpose of this learning experience is to introduce students to the concept of the resilient zone, which you can also call the “OK zone” or “zone of well-being,” by using a puppet and charts to facilitate understanding. The resilient zone refers to when our mind and body are in a state of well-being. When we are in our resilient zone we can handle the stresses that happen during the day and react with the best part of ourselves. Stress can bump us out of our resilient zone into our high or low zone.

When we are stuck in the high zone we may feel anxious, agitated, nervous, angry, stressed out, and so on. Our body is dysregulated, making it hard for us to concentrate, learn new information, or make good decisions. When we are stuck in the low zone, we may feel tired, lacking in energy, unexcited about things we normally like, unmotivated, and deflated and it’s just as difficult for us to learn new things, solve problems, or make our best choices.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Understand our three zones.
- Develop the skill of recognizing which zone they are in at any given moment through tracking.
- Develop the skill of returning to the resilient zone using resourcing and grounding.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Self-Regulation

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- A board or chart paper for drawing the three zones
- Enough copies of the provided stories to distribute to pairs or trios if you wish to do the insight activity in small groups
- For optional insight activity: another story to diagram

LENGTH

30 minutes

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“Take a moment to give your attention to the sensations inside your body. You might want to check how much energy you have, whether you are feeling heavier or lighter, warmer or cooler, relaxed and soft, or tight and jumpy. I invite you to notice what’s going on.*
- *Last time we talked about grounding - using our body and senses to help us calm down and feel better. Can you remember something you tried that felt pleasant or neutral to you? (Take enough responses to feel that most strategies have been represented.) Is anyone having trouble remembering these? (If so, you might want to make a list to post in the classroom.)*
- *Is there one form of grounding you would like to try right now? (Allow some time for individual choice and exploration, or you may want to choose one experience for the whole group to try.)*
- *How do you feel now? Can you tell whether that exercise was helpful to you? Do you notice any differences in your body?”*

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 10 minutes

The Resilient Zone

Overview

In this presentation, you will discuss the concept of the resilient zone, the high zone, and the low zone, using a story and charts to facilitate understanding and set up for the next activity, which goes through the day of a child

(“Nelson”) and how that child experiences the day in his body and nervous system.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Stressors can knock us out of our resilient zone. All people experience being stuck in the high zone or stuck in the low zone.
- When we are stuck in one of those two zones, we tend not to make the best decisions and we don’t feel good.
- There are specific practices we can do to return to the resilient zone.
- Once in the resilient zone, we experience more well-being, our bodies are healthier, we are kinder to ourselves and others, and we make better decisions.

Materials Required

- A board or chart paper for drawing the three zones

Instructions

- Explain that you are going to read a story together about a character named Nelson and that you are going to talk about Nelson’s day and ask them to think about what Nelson might be feeling as he goes about his day. In order to do this, explain that you will be using a chart that shows different zones or different ways Nelson could be feeling in his body.
- Show a chart of the resilient zone or draw one on the board or a piece of chart paper. Your drawing should have two horizontal lines and a wavy line between them inside it going up and down.

- Explain that this drawing shows how our bodies, and specifically our nervous systems, go throughout the day: sometimes getting more excited or even upset, sometimes feeling more tired or low in energy.
- Explain that the middle zone is the “resilient zone” (or “OK zone” or “zone of well-being” or another name your class can come up with.) This is where we’ll put Nelson when he’s feeling OK. He could be experiencing a range of emotions and feelings in this zone, but his body is still healthy and he can make good decisions. He can be OK sad or OK mad and still be in his resilient zone/OK zone.
- You can explain that “resilient” means the ability to deal with and handle difficulties; the ability to bounce back; inner strength, fortitude or toughness.
- Draw the lightning bolt symbol (or some other symbol) to represent the stressor or trigger. Explain that sometimes things happen that upset Nelson or make him feel less safe. If we come across something like this in the story, we can use a lightning bolt to indicate that something might be stressing Nelson. This might even knock Nelson out of his resilient zone. If that happens, he could get stuck in the high or low zone.
- Now add two pictures that represent a child being stuck in the high zone or low zone, such as the ones provided in the graphic. (You may print out the accompanying graphic and use that instead.)
- Ask your students what they think the boy in the high zone is feeling – really angry, upset nervous, anxious? If Nelson gets stuck in the high zone, what might he sense on the inside?
 - You may need to provide examples first. Write down the words they give you, using a different color (such as red) for sensation words. Then repeat this with the low zone. What do they think the girl in the low zone is feeling-sad, tired, alone? If Nelson were to get stuck in the low zone, what might he sense on the inside? Write down the words they give you, using a different color for sensation words.
- Then tell the story of Nelson included in the sample script below, pausing to check (a) what the students think Nelson might be sensing in his body; (b) where he might be on the resilient zone chart; (c) what he could do to get back to the resilient zone or stay there.
- Conclude the discussion by reminding the students that we have already learned a lot of skills that we can use to return to our resilient zone.
- Invite them to resource and/or ground as you end the discussion.

Teaching Tips

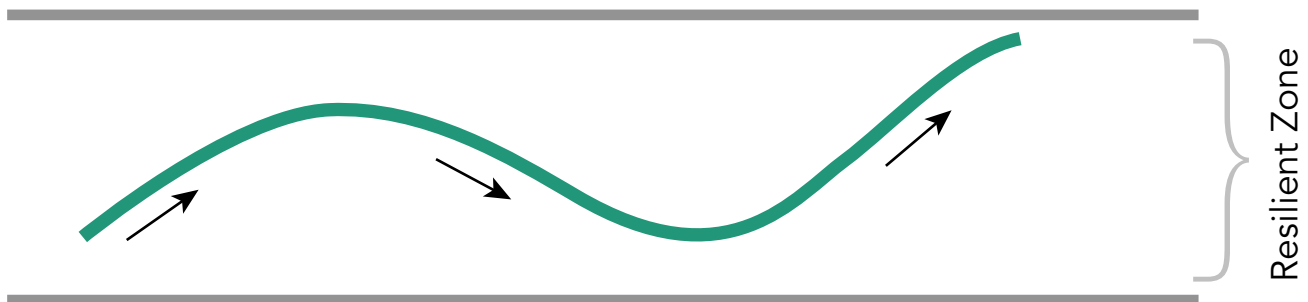
- Don’t be concerned if your students do not reach these critical insights right away, as they are reinforced in the following two learning experiences also.
- **A note on safety: When teaching about the three zones, it is safest to use a proxy at**

first (such as a story, a puppet, pictures, or emojis) to represent being stuck in the high or low zones and to ask students about what they think that proxy is feeling or sensing. This is a way of teaching the three zones indirectly at first. It is *not* recommended to ask students direct questions such as, “What do you feel like when you’re stuck in your high zone?” or “What is it like for us to be stuck in the high zone?” or “Do you remember a time when you were stuck in your high zone?” Doing so could inadvertently

cause a student to experience a traumatic flashback or to describe the worst thing that ever happened to them. Similarly, it is best to avoid creating scenarios to teach this material that involve students directly simulating being stuck in their high zone or low zone, rather than through a proxy or a role play.

- You may find the script below particularly helpful as you try this learning experience for the first time.

THE RESILIENT ZONE

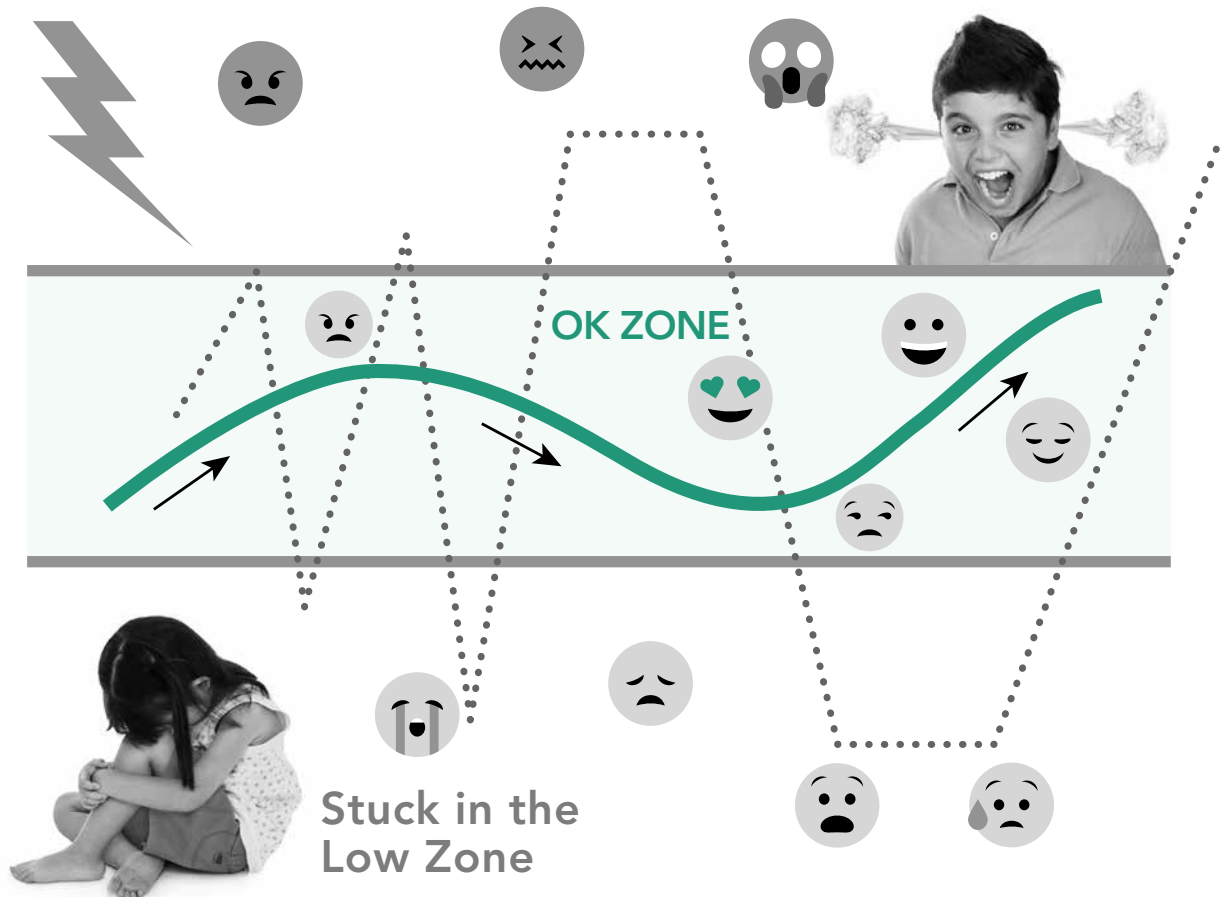


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Graphic adapted from an original graphic of Peter Levine/Heller, original slide design by Genie Everett

Trigger or Stressful Event

Stuck in the High Zone



Sample script

- *"We've been learning about our bodies and in particular our nervous system.*
- *What have we learned that our nervous system does?*
- *We've been paying attention to our sensations. And we've learned how to calm ourselves using resourcing, grounding, and Help Now! strategies.*
- *We're going to read a story together about a character named Nelson.*
- *Nelson is the same age as most of you. He also goes to a school like you, and we're going to work to understand the nervous system better by thinking about what Nelson goes through in a day.*
- *To do that we're going to use a picture that is helpful for understanding our nervous system. This picture shows us what Nelson's nervous system is doing as he goes about his day.*
- *This middle part is called our resilient zone [or OK zone or zone of well-being.] That's*

because in the middle here, Nelson's body is feeling resilient.

- Has anyone heard the word "resilient"? Who can take a guess at what the meaning is? [Allow students to share.]
- Resilient means we are strong on the inside, we are in control, and we can handle any difficulties. Even if difficult things happen, since we are resilient, we can bounce back and be in control again.
- When we're in our resilient zone, we might have some difficulties, but we can deal with them because we have inner strength. We are not super stressed-out or super troubled because we have learned how to get our bodies and minds into a better place that helps us feel better.
- How do you think Nelson feels in his body when he's here in this zone?
- Through the day we might go up and down [draw a wavy line in the resilient zone]. The line going up means we might get excited and have lots of energy, or the line going down means we might get sleepy or be a bit low in energy. But we can still do that in our resilient zone.
- But then something scary happens or something we don't like [draw or point to the lightning bolt]. And it knocks us out of our resilient zone. And we might get stuck in our high zone.

- How do you think this boy [on the graphic] feels when he gets stuck in his high zone? [Allow responses.]

- Yes, many of you noted what it feels like to be stuck in the high zone - he doesn't like it. He feels anxious and scared. He also might feel angry and upset! He feels out of control, like he doesn't know what he's going to do. He feels a lot of stress in the high zone. And sometimes feeling a lot of stress can make him go to the low zone as well.
- How do you think that girl who is stuck in the low zone is feeling? [Allow responses.]
- Yes, many of you noted what it feels like in the low zone - she might feel low in energy and sad. She just doesn't feel like doing things. She doesn't feel like playing the games she usually likes; she's just not interested. She may just want to be alone. She may feel lonely, even if other people are around. She thinks it feels bad to be stuck in the low zone and she feels better when she can get back to the resilient zone."

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 12 minutes

Nelson's Day

Overview

In this insight activity, students go through Nelson's day, which is a typical day in the life of a child roughly the same age your students. As you tell the story of Nelson's day, you will let the students guide the process by asking them where Nelson is on the resilient zone chart.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Stressors can knock us out of our resilient zone. All people experience being stuck in the high zone or stuck in the low zone.
- When we are stuck in one of those two zones, we tend not to make the best decisions and we don't feel good.
- There are specific practices we can do to return to the resilient zone
- Once in the resilient zone, we experience more well-being, our bodies are healthier, we are kinder to ourselves and others, and we make better decisions.

Materials Required

- The sample story (below)
- Marker
- Whiteboard or chart paper

Instructions

- An asterisk is placed at each point in the story where you can pause and ask your students to guide you as to what Nelson might be feeling and where he is on the resilient zone chart. Ask, "What sensations do you think Nelson is feeling right now in his body?" After they've shared that, ask, "Where is Nelson in his three zones?" Ask them to be specific—if he's in the resilient zone, is he in the middle or the upper part of it or the lower part of it? Or has he been bumped out of his resilient zone? If so, he is stuck on high, and if so how high? As they give you the answers, you will be drawing a wavy line from left to right that chronicles

Nelson's day and where he is on the chart based on what they say.

- At some points the students may feel something stressful has happened that knocks Nelson out of his resilient zone. At those times you can ask, "Should we put a lightning bolt here? Should it be a big lightning bolt or a small one?" If your students think these bump Nelson out of his resilient zone, you will draw the line accordingly to show that.
- Also when you see an asterisk in the story and pause, you can ask your students to recommend things Nelson could do to calm himself or make himself feel better. As Nelson does those things, they may decide that he returns to his resilient zone. Note that you do not need to adhere rigidly to every time an asterisk appears in the story. These are just suggested moments when you can pause and check-in. Most likely, your interaction with the students will be more fluid than this and you may wish to pause more or less frequently depending on how they are participating in the activity.
- At the end, you will ask them to look at the whole picture and share what they notice. Lastly, explore the idea that if Nelson thinks about his day, and knows when stressful things tend to happen, might he be able to prepare in advance for those things so that they have less of a chance of bumping him out of his resilient zone?
- End with an opportunity for them to practice resourcing and grounding themselves.

Teaching Tips

- A sample story is provided for you, but before doing this activity you should feel free to change it to fit the typical experiences your own students might have so that they can best relate to what Nelson is going through. (Note that once you go through this exercise once with your students, they should be able to do a similar exercise with any story that you read to them or tell them: that is, they will be able to tell you what the character(s) is feeling in his or her body and where they might be in their resilient zone (or out of it).)
- As an alternative, you can demark the resilient zone on the floor with rope or tape and have students move from zone to zone as they hear Nelson's story and you land on an asterisk.

Nelson's Story

*"Nelson wakes up. It's so early! He doesn't have to leave for school until 8am, but for some reason he's very excited and he woke up earlier than usual. Why?**

Nelson's mother comes into his bedroom. "Nelson! You're up early. Why don't you brush your teeth and get dressed." She begins to open his closet and say, "Would you like me to get your clothes out for you?"

*"No! I can do it myself!" Nelson says.**

"Okay, that's great," Nelson's mother says.

Nelson searches his closet and the clothes hamper for his favorite jeans and t-shirt until

*he finds them. The jeans are soft in all the right places, and he likes the way he looks in the shirt. Then he looks for his favorite sneakers, and he finds them in the bathroom where he puts them on. He looks at himself in the long mirror and thinks, "I look good."**

*Nelson brushes his teeth and goes downstairs. His mother is preparing breakfast for him. It's eggs and roast potatoes, his favorite. "Yay!" he says as he settles down to eat.**

"Nelson, you're going to be late," says his mother. "Hurry up and finish your food. Do you have your book bag?"

"No, it's upstairs," Nelson says as he's eating.

"Go and get it," says his mother. "And don't forget to put your homework assignment in it."

"But I'm still eating!" says Nelson. He is enjoying his food so much.

*"You have to go and get it now or you'll be late," says his mother. "Go now."**

*Nelson has to take a bus to school. He almost misses the bus! But he gets out just in time to catch it. When he finally gets on the bus and sits down next to his friend Arya, he says, "Phew! I just made it!"**

Nelson arrives at school and goes to his classroom. The teacher comes in and has all the students sit in a circle.

"Now it's time for us to show our assignments," the teacher says. "Remember I gave you some homework to do?"

Nelson suddenly remembers that the teacher gave them some homework to do, but he didn't do it.

"Oh no," he thinks. "How did I forget about that again?"

"Let's go in a circle," the teacher says. One by one, each student shows their homework. Nelson knows it's going to be his turn soon.

*"Now it's your turn, Nelson," says the teacher and points at him.**

"I didn't do it," said Nelson. "I'm sorry."

*"Don't worry," says the teacher and smiles at him kindly. "You can bring it tomorrow."**

*Nelson sees that a few other students also didn't do their homework, and the teacher tells them that they too can bring theirs tomorrow.**

*At lunchtime, Nelson is so happy because it's his favorite food: pizza!**

Nelson goes outside to play for recess after lunch, when they always have a little time to play before coming back to class. He sees some other kids playing kickball. "I love kickball!" Nelson thinks.

But when he goes over to play with them, they don't let him play. "You can't play with us!" they shout. "You're no good!"

*Nelson is surprised and sad. He goes off by himself and stands at the edge of the playground. Suddenly he doesn't feel like playing with anyone any more. His whole body suddenly feels very heavy.**

Then Nelson's friend Theresa comes over to him.

"Hey, Nelson," she says, "we're playing kickball too. Won't you come and play with us? We'd love to have you on our team!"

*"Really?" says Nelson. "Okay!"**

He runs over and plays kickball with Theresa and the other students until recess is over.

*At the end of the school day Nelson goes home. He does his homework, has dinner with his family, and then crawls into bed. He's so tired and his legs hurt a bit from playing so much kickball, but the soft pillows feel so good under his head.**

The End"

DEBRIEF | 4 minutes

- *“Who would like to explain a part of what the drawing of the resilient zone means?”*
 - *How do you think we’d know if someone else was in their high zone?*
 - *What about their low zone?*
 - *What do you think are other words we could use to explain to someone what resilient means?*
 - *Do you think most people have been stuck in the high zone some time? What about the low zone?*
 - *What did you learn today that you want to remember because you feel it might be helpful sometime?”*
- *Together, your group will create a chart like the one we made together in a large group.*
 - *When you are finished, we will share out as a whole group.”*
-

OPTIONAL INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 15 minutes Practicing Naming Sensations and Zones with Stories*

Overview

This activity offers a way for small groups of students to practice noticing and naming sensations and zones through the use of stories. Select a story for your class to read - it can be almost any story or you could write it yourself. It could just be part of a story, enough to give them something to diagram.

Sample Script

- *“In pairs or trios, your group is going to read a story together and chart a character’s experiences with the three zones.*

Exploring the Resilient Zone through Scenarios

PURPOSE

The purpose of this learning experience is to build off of Learning Experience 5, “The Resilient Zone,” by allowing students to move on a map of the three zones on the ground according to how they feel the characters in specific scenarios might be feeling. This helps them to further embody their understanding

of resiliency and the nervous system, while still maintaining an indirect approach, in that you are not asking them what it is like when they themselves are stuck in their high or low zones, but rather you are exploring this through characters in a scenario.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Understand our three zones.
- Develop the skill of recognizing which zone they are in at any given moment through tracking.
- Develop the skill of returning to the resilient zone using resourcing and grounding.

LENGTH

30 minutes

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Self-Regulation

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- The charts of the resilient zone and nervous system to put up for students to see
- Sample scenarios (provided)
- Colored tape to place on the floor to create the three zones

CHECK-IN | 5 minutes

- *“Take a moment to give your attention to the sensations inside your body. You might want to check how much energy you have, whether you are feeling heavier or lighter, warmer or cooler, relaxed and soft, or tight and jumpy. I invite you to notice what’s going on.*
- *Last time we talked about grounding - using our body and senses to help us calm down and feel better. Can you remember something you tried that felt pleasant or neutral to you? (Take enough responses to feel that most strategies have been represented.) Is anyone having trouble remembering these? (If so, you might want to make a list to post in the classroom.)*
- *Is there one form of grounding you would like to try right now? (Allow some time for individual choice and exploration, or you may want to choose one experience for the whole group to try.)*
- *How do you feel now? Can you tell whether that exercise was helpful to you? Do you notice any differences in your body?*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY

20 minutes

Exploring the Three Zones through Scenarios*

Overview

In this activity, you will provide different scenarios and the students will stand along a line or diagram on the ground that shows the three zones, indicating where they think the

character would be in their bodies based on that scenario. They will share what it’s like to be in those zones. Then they will suggest to each other what the character could do to return to their resilient zone. Those stuck in a high or low zone will then do the practices suggested, and can move if they find themselves returning to the resilient zone. This is an activity you may wish to repeat multiple times.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Stressors can knock us out of our resilient zone. All people experience being stuck in the high zone or stuck in the low zone.
- When we are stuck in one of those two zones, we tend not to make the best decisions and we don’t feel good.
- There are specific practices we can do to return to the resilient zone.
- Once in the resilient zone, we experience more well-being, our bodies are healthier, we are kinder to ourselves and others, and we make better decisions.

Materials Required

- The chart(s) of the resilient zone and nervous system to put up for students to see
- Sample scenarios (provided)
- Colored tape to place on the floor to create the three zones.

Instructions

- Draw a visual representation on the ground of the three zones, which will be your “zone

map." An easy way to do this is to use colored tape and simply draw two parallel lines, thereby creating the three zones. The resilient zone will be the space between the two lines, the high zone will be above the top line, and the low zone will be below the bottom line. If you like you can also put signs on the ground that say "High," Resilient" (or "Well-Being"), and "Low."

- If you feel it would be helpful, because your students don't quite have a firm grasp on the word "resilient," you can also write the word "resilient" on the board or on chart paper and ask students to name other words that are like resilient, creating a word map.
- Next ask for 2-4 volunteers who will stand on the zone map based on a scenario you read. Explain that everyone else will be an observer. You will then read out a scenario from the samples below (or make up your own) and ask these volunteers to stand where they think the character(s) in the story would be. Tell them that the three zones are a continuum: for example, they can be in the resilient zone but towards the high end of it (for example, if they are energetic or excited, but not stressed out), just into the high zone (slightly stressed), or very far high in the high zone (highly stressed out).
- After they've found their positions, ask the volunteers to share why they are standing where they are standing (they do not all have to agree or stand in the same place), and ask them to share what they might be sensing in their bodies.
- Then ask the rest of the class (the observers) for suggestions as to what the character(s) could do to feel better. They should suggest some of the skills (Help Now! skills, resourcing or grounding, or other activities. Ask the volunteers (and observers if you like) if they would like to practice what has been suggested. Those who wish to can then do the skill. Then ask them how the character would now be feeling, and if they'd like to move to a place that better describes where the character would be now.
- Repeat with a new scenario and new volunteers.

Teaching Tips

- Note that this activity is a soft way of exploring the zones and the practices due to the fact that you are using scenarios rather than asking students directly where they are in their bodies. Because our nervous systems are constantly reacting to circumstances, however, it is very likely that you will in fact have students who may be stuck in a high zone or low zone. Our nervous systems also react to thoughts and imagination as if they were real. Therefore, the practice combines imagination with reality, and it is good for you as the teacher to be aware of this and see that activation of the nervous system is going to happen, and that the practices the students use can help them regulate their bodies in the moment.
- Gradually, practicing these skills can expand your students' resilient zones, making it harder

for them to be bumped out into the high or low zones by stressors and making it easier for them to return to their resilient zone if they are bumped out.

- Once students understand the process, using scenarios that have actually happened in your class or between students can be very effective: this helps develop the important skills of empathy, perspective-taking, and conflict transformation that are more fully explored later in SEE Learning.

Sample Scenarios

These scenarios are offered only as examples. Please feel free to change the names of the characters to be appropriate for your class or to choose situations more appropriate for your class. You may wish to choose names that are not names that your students have. While you can allow students to be wherever they feel they should be and explain why, some suggestions of typical responses are provided in brackets.

- Stanley is a student your age, and he has to perform in front of the whole school. [He might be stressed out, and stuck in the high zone or low zone if he is scared of public speaking. He may be excited but in the resilient zone because he likes public speaking.]
- Keiko is in bed at home. She can't sleep because tomorrow is her birthday and she knows she's going to be getting some wonderful presents. [She might be excited but not stressed, and therefore probably not stuck in the high zone.]
- Jasmine goes to sit with her friends at lunch, but none of them saved her a seat. Instead, they all spread out at the table so there isn't room for her. She's left holding her tray with nowhere to sit. [Probably stuck in the low zone, or in the lower part of the resilient zone. Alternatively, she could get angry and be stuck in the high zone or in the higher part of her resilient zone.]
- Cameron shows up for school and is asked by his teacher for his homework. But he didn't do any of it.
- Steven is at home one evening. He hears his older brother fighting with his mother and both of them are shouting.
- Claire is at home with her parents on the weekend. They say, "We're going out and you are going to watch your two brothers." This is the first time she will babysit at night with no adults in the house.
- Aliyah is out at the mall with her parents, but they've allowed her to shop on her own for an hour. When she shows up at their meeting place, her parents aren't there. Fifteen minutes pass, and they don't answer her texts. [You can also ask where her parents may be since they are running late.]
- Kiara comes to school to find that her class has thrown her a surprise birthday party!
- Tyler and Santiago are at a haunted house. "Let's go in! It will be fun!" says Tyler. "I don't want to go," says Santiago. "No, let's go!" says Tyler and he pulls Santiago inside.

[Have some students show where they think Tyler would be and some Santiago.]

You may wish to repeat this activity a few times. Use these examples to come up with your own scenarios, developing ones that will be closer to situations your students might encounter. Work with students to come up with scenarios, perhaps similar to those that have occurred in your class.

DEBRIEF | 5 minutes

- *“Let’s take a moment to bring to mind one of our resources. You can take one out of your treasure chest if you like and touch it or hold it.*
- *Let’s pay attention to our resource for a moment and notice any sensations that arise in the body.*
- *If you notice a pleasant or neutral sensation, let’s stay with that for a few moments. If you notice an unpleasant sensation, let’s find a place that feels better in the body and then rest there.*
- *What do you notice?*
- *What did you learn today that you want to remember because you feel it might be helpful sometime?”*

How Compassion and Safety Affect the Body

PURPOSE

The purpose of this final learning experience in Chapter 2 is to return to the foundational concepts of kindness, happiness, and safety explored in Chapter 1 and tie in what has been learned in Chapter 2. Now that the students have a greater understanding of their bodies, how to calm them, and the resilient zone, they can connect this with what they learned about happiness, compassion, and the value of class agreements. Stress and a sense of threat can knock us out of our resilient zone, making us feel uncomfortable and actually releasing chemicals in our bodies and dysregulating

our nervous system in ways that are unhealthy and can even cause long-term damage. Since students now have first-person experience exploring how we can get bumped out of our resilient zones, and how uncomfortable that can feel, and also know that we can help each other return to our resilient zones/OK zones through compassion, they can understand the importance of compassion and their class agreements on a deeper level. They are helping each other to be happy and healthy, and are even helping each others' bodies to be happy and healthy.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Synthesize the class agreements with their understanding of how the body experiences kindness, safety, and happiness.
- Recognize the relationship between nervous system dysregulation and physical health.

LENGTH

30 minutes

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Interpersonal Awareness

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- The chart of class agreements and the chart of helping actions that were created in Chapter 1
- The resilient zone chart
- Graphic of the autonomic nervous system (if possible - there is one in the chapter introduction for your use)

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“Let’s take out our resource kits and see if there’s something in there we’d like to use. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can find a comfortable way to sit, stand or lean.*
- *If you’re resourcing, then pick one of your personal resources and hold it in your hands or place it in front of you. Let your eyes rest on it, or close your eyes and feel it carefully with your hands.*
- *If you’re grounding, just bring your attention to your body.*
- *Let’s now take a few moments to do tracking and pay attention to the sensations inside our bodies. [Pause.]*
- *If you find a pleasant or neutral sensation just pay attention to that and watch it. See if it changes or stays the same.*
- *If you haven’t found a pleasant or neutral sensation, see if you can shift to another part of your body to find a place that feels better. [Pause.]*
- *What did you notice?”*

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 8+ minutes

Overview

The point of this discussion is to help your students understand that what they have been experiencing in the body has implications for health and happiness overall.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Experiencing a lack of compassion can make us feel stressed and unsafe and knock us out of our resilient zone. Experiencing kindness can help us feel safe.
- Having less stress is healthy for our bodies.
- By being kind and respecting others, we can help others feel safer, happier, and more healthy.

Materials Required

- Resilient zone chart
- Graphic of the autonomic nervous system (if possible - there is one in the chapter introduction for your use)

Instructions

- Begin by reviewing sensations and the information we receive from them.
- Show students the resiliency zone chart again. Review what happens to our bodies when we are in or out of the resilient zone. Discuss how the body might feel when in the high zone and the low zone. Discuss ways of helping one’s body return to the resilient zone.
- Use the resource kits for resourcing after talking about the zones.
- If possible, show a picture of the human body showing the autonomic nervous system (ANS) and/or the organs inside the body.
- Explain the ANS and how it reacts to danger and stress.

- Discuss how we can affect others and their zones and how we can help others get back into the resilient zone.

Teaching Tips

- Our nervous systems are designed to keep us alive, and as such respond to perceived threats or the need to mobilize with activation of the sympathetic nervous system. This stress response releases chemicals in our bodies and increases inflammation as the body prepares for potential danger. This is not a problem in the short term, but chronic inflammation and stress gradually weakens our bodies and makes us susceptible to a whole range of physical and mental illnesses.
- This means that when we feel safer, calmer, and/or happier, our bodies are physically healthier and can do things like learn, grow, develop, rest, digest, regenerate, and heal. When we are feeling unsafe and unhappy, our bodies shut down the systems that allow us to do those things, instead preparing us for danger. When we understand this, we can realize that how we treat each other matters deeply. Being mean to someone is likely to cause them to feel stress and a lack of safety, making their bodies less healthy and contributing to illness. Being kind to someone helps them feel safe, making their bodies more healthy. Since we want health and happiness for ourselves, we want others to treat us with kindness and we want to feel safe around them. It makes sense therefore to show to others what we want for ourselves: kindness and compassion.

Sample script

- *“We’ve been exploring the sensations in our body. When we pay attention to them, we learn if we’re feeling good, happy and safe, or if we’re feeling a bit nervous, unsafe, or unhappy.*
- *We’ve also learned what we can do to make ourselves feel happier, calmer, and safer in our bodies. What are some of the things we’ve learned to do for that? [Allow for just enough sharing that students are connecting with the last lessons.]*
- *Show the resilient zone chart. When we are in the resilient zone/OK zone, can someone show me what that may feel like in your body? Why?*
- *What do you think happens inside our bodies when we are in our resilient zone/OK zone? Do you think it’s healthy for our bodies to be in our resilient zone/ok zone? Why or why not?*
- *What do you think happens inside our bodies when we get stuck in the high zone a lot? Do you think it’s healthy for our bodies to be stuck in the high zone? Why or why not?*
- *What about the low zone? Why?*
- *Let’s take a moment to look at something in our resource kit, think of a resource, or ground. Be aware of what happens inside.*
- *[If possible, show a picture of the human body showing the autonomic nervous system and/or the organs inside the body.] Scientists have discovered that when we are feeling unsafe or*

when we are stuck in our high or low zones for a long time, it is not healthy for our bodies.

- We get stressed, and our nervous systems release a lot of chemicals in our bodies that could make us sick if we're not careful.
- What are some things we need our nervous system to do? It's the part of the body inside that controls our inner organs, like our stomach, our heart, our lungs. It helps us digest things when we eat. It helps us sleep and rest. It even helps us grow our body to be bigger and stronger. It has to keep our heart beating and our lungs breathing and our blood flowing.
- It's the nervous system that does all these things. When we're in the resilient zone/OK zone, then it can do all these things just fine. It also protects us properly against germs, diseases, and illness.
- But when we're stuck in the high zone or low zone, our nervous system has a hard time doing these things. Instead, it gets ready for danger and it stops doing things we need to be doing to be healthy.
- That's okay if there's a real danger, and we need to run fast or do something quickly. But if there's no real danger, then it doesn't need to be ready like that.
- When we're stuck in the high or low zone, what do you think happens to our heart? To our breathing? To our ability to digest food? To our ability to rest?

- If we can't digest our food properly, or if we can't rest properly, or if we can't grow properly, then that's a problem, isn't it?
- If we are not in danger and our nervous system does not need to take action to keep us safer, in which zone would we want to be?
- Would we want to make someone else feel unsafe and bump somebody into their high zone or low zone? What might we do that could bump someone into the high zone or low zone? [Allow sharing.]
- What might we do that could help someone stay in the resilient zone/OK zone or get back into the resilient zone/OK zone if they were bumped out?" [Allow sharing.]

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 13+ minutes

Acting Out the Class Agreements with Tracking

Overview

In this practice, students will work together to create little skits. If you have the ability to do so, you can video record these skits and tell your class that you'll be making a short movie.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Experiencing a lack of kindness can make us feel stressed and unsafe and knock us out of our resilient zone. Experiencing kindness can help us feel safe.
- Having less stress is healthy for our bodies.

- By being compassionate and respecting others, we can help others feel safer, happier and more healthy.

Materials Required

- The chart of class agreements
- The chart of helping actions that were created in Chapter 1

Instructions

- Using the class agreements and the helping actions they created in Chapter One, explain that they will create stories based on these agreements being followed or broken and then will act these stories out (and make a movie, if you have the ability to do so). When creating stories, be sure to use made-up names for characters that are not the actual names of students in your class. As before, it may work to have one student pretend to be in need and have one or two other students see that need and engage in helping actions.
- After a story has been created, ask for volunteers to act it out. Explain that when you say “Go!” they will start the story and everyone else will be quiet and watch. When you say “Slow!” they will slow down their actions and take a moment to notice sensations in their body (tracking). You might also first ask the observing students what they think the characters in the story might be sensing in their bodies, and which zone they might be in. When you say “Go!” again, the acting students will continue the story. When you say “The End!” they can stop acting out the story.

- After the scenario has been acted out, which may only take a minute, allow both those who volunteered, and then those who observed, to share what they saw and felt. Then ask the observers what helping actions they might have done had they been in the story.
- When this debrief is completed, have your students create another story if there is time

Teaching Tips

You can repeat this reflective practice several times, each time emphasizing different class agreements or activities. You can also draw from actual scenarios that have happened in class, seeing how they relate to the class agreements and walking students through the scenario while having them pay attention to their sensations and prompting them to suggest what skills or actions could be helpful.

DEBRIEF | 5 minutes

- *“What did you learn today about our class agreements?”*
- *How do our class agreements affect our bodies?*
- *Is happiness something we feel inside the body? How do we know that? What about compassion?*
- *Is there anything you think we should add to the class agreements after what we did today?*
- *Is there anything you learned or practiced about compassion that you might like to use again sometime?”*

WRITING EXTENSION

We have learned that compassion can make us feel happy and safe. It is important that we receive compassion on an everyday basis and that we are being kind to others. When we are kind to others, it can help them feel safer. This makes it a bit easier for them to move into or stay in their resilient zones. Let's reflect in our journals about how we can help others feel safer. What actions can you try to do over the next week when you see a friend in need?

MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 3

Strengthening Attention & Self-Awareness



Overview

In the first chapter of SEE Learning, “Creating a Compassionate Classroom,” students explored how we all share a natural inclination towards well-being and happiness, and that because of this, we all wish to be treated with kindness, compassion, and respect. It only makes sense that we learn about our minds and bodies so that we can practice kindness towards ourselves as well. One important aspect of this was explored in Chapter 2, “Building Resilience,” which focused on how to understand and regulate the autonomic nervous system. Self-care and kindness towards others go hand in hand, since if we experience dysregulation within ourselves, we may be more likely to cause difficulties for others and less likely to act kindly and attentively towards them. From our own personal experience, we can see how dysregulation can contribute to behaviors and choices that we later regret.

In addition to “body literacy” and awareness of the nervous system, self-compassion and compassion for others are supported by “emotional literacy” and an understanding of how our minds work. For this, we need to be able to observe our minds and our experiences carefully and with close attention. This is the topic of Chapter 3, “Strengthening Attention and Self-Awareness.”

Attention training has numerous other benefits for students as well. It facilitates concentration, learning, and the retention of information. It allows one to better control one’s impulses. It calms the body and mind in ways that promote physical and psychological health. Yet while often told to “Pay attention!”, students are rarely taught the methods by which they can train and cultivate stronger attention. In SEE Learning, attention is not cultivated through force of will, but by repeatedly and gently cultivating opportunities for practice, just like any other skill.

Students have no trouble paying close attention to things they find interesting. The problem is paying attention when things are less stimulating or when there are distractions that appear more worthy of attention. Therefore, this chapter takes a multi-pronged approach to attention training. First, it introduces the idea of attention training and its potential benefits. Second, it shows students that when we pay attention to things, we may find them more interesting than we initially thought. Third, it introduces attention exercises that are a bit more stimulating and therefore likely easier. Lastly, it introduces attention training with objects of attention that are more neutral and less stimulating, like the simple act of walking or paying attention to one’s breath. Throughout, students are invited to notice what happens to their minds when they are able to pay attention with calmness, stability, and clarity.

In learning experience 1, “Exploring the Mind,” students use an activity called the “Mind Jar” to explore what is meant by “mind.” In SEE Learning, “mind” is a broad category that includes

subjective, first-person experience: thoughts, emotions, attitudes, memories, feelings, and so on. These processes naturally also involve the body, so mind and body are understood as interconnected. At a more advanced level, the mind also involves processes that are not always immediately obvious to us: associations, unconscious or automatic processes, and so on.

The purpose of exploring what we mean by mind is two-fold in SEE Learning: first, so that students can gradually develop a “map of the mind,” meaning an understanding of mental processes, including emotions, and second, so that students can understand what it means to pay attention to our minds and cultivate attention as a skill, particularly for gaining greater insight into mental processes.

Learning experience 2, “Exploring Attention,” helps students investigate what attention means, and how it involves both the senses and the mind. By learning to pay attention to attention itself, students can discover that they can strengthen attention much like building a muscle or developing a skill. While it takes practice, it gets easier over time.

Learning experiences 3 and 4, “Cultivating Attention in Activities Part 1” and “Part 2,” help students explore the various things to which we can pay attention, including actions, and also why we would strive to cultivate attention. One reason is that attention to our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors helps us catch emotional impulses before they become problematic: that is, we become better able at catching the spark before it becomes a forest fire.

This leads to the realization that attention training, while of great help in learning in general, is also especially important in supporting self-care. The learning experiences therefore introduce students to three facets of attention training that are especially important for self-care: (1) Awareness, (2) Heedfulness, and (3) Mindfulness.

In SEE Learning, “mindfulness” means retaining something in one’s mind and not forgetting it, getting distracted, or losing sight of it. If one wants to concentrate on studying for a test, but one becomes distracted by a song and starts to daydream, then one has lost mindfulness of what one set out to do. If one commits to doing something, but then forgets all about it, then one has lost mindfulness of that commitment. Mindfulness is therefore not only important with regard to attention, but with regard to one’s ethical values and commitments. In that sense it goes alongside compassion and supports it. The term “mindfulness” is defined specifically in SEE Learning and this may differ from how it is used in other programs, so a section below explains these differences. “Mindfulness” as used here means a precise focus or placement of the mind for the purpose of retention.

“Heedfulness” means being cautious and careful with regard to things that could cause problems for oneself or others. If one becomes aware that the stovetop becomes very hot while one is cooking, then one will take a stance to avoid getting burned and will be heedful of it. Similarly, if one gains a critical insight that one has a tendency to hurt others with sarcasm or ridicule, then one can become heedful of one’s speech.

Supporting both of these is “awareness”: being aware of what is going on in the mind, in the body, and in one’s surroundings in the present moment. Without being aware of what is going on in one’s mind, one cannot notice that one is about to react in a harmful way, and therefore one cannot retain mindfulness or practice heedfulness.

Learning experience 5, “Cultivating Attention on an Object,” helps students explore how to focus their attention on a single object, such as the breath, and sustain awareness of it over time in order to build the muscle of attention. Because the breath is not a particularly stimulating object of attention, it can be very suitable for some students in the cultivation of attention. The objective here, if attention training is to support cognitive control, is to develop both clarity and stability. Here, stability means that one’s attention stays on the chosen object of focus and is sustained over time without being pulled away by distraction to something else. Clarity means that the mind is not dull, lax, or lethargic, but rather engages its object of attention with alertness and vividness. Hence, one can have stability of attention without clarity (like listening to a lecture but with a foggy or sleepy mind), and one can have clarity without stability (being very alert to what is happening but having one’s attention flitting from thing to thing due to distraction and an inability to focus).

As students cultivate their attention to a greater degree, these concepts become important to address. Otherwise, students can inadvertently start to cultivate a dull state of mind when they do their reflective practices, akin to taking a nap. This would be a lack of clarity. Or students could be daydreaming, which would not lead to stronger attention. This would be a lack of stability. Neither is conducive for learning or for cultivating emotional literacy.

For many students, mindful attention to activities and the breath can lead to relaxation. For some, however, the attempt to maintain focus on a single activity or object can feel unpleasant and can increase anxiety. It is therefore recommended that you wait to implement these learning experiences until after your students have developed a degree of familiarity with the practices covered in Chapter 2, “Building Resilience.” Those practices can lead to a greater relaxation in the body that then makes the cultivation of attention easier, and they also give students valuable tools for self-regulation should focused attention lead to anxiety. As noted in Chapter 2, the resilient skills also

become part of students' toolkits to assist them when they are experiencing difficulties. Teachers are encouraged to always provide choice, so that students can disengage from specific practices if necessary or choose activities that are most helpful to them.

Learning experience 6, "Self-Awareness," further explores the relationship between the cultivation of attention and an increase in self-awareness. Up to this point, previous learning experiences have covered attention to the senses, to sensations, to activities, and to a particular object, such as the breath. This final learning experience explores using attention to look at the mind itself. Just as students can learn to pay attention to external things, they can also learn to pay attention to their own thoughts, emotions, and feelings. This is called meta-awareness or meta-cognition.

This learning experience introduces the practice of paying attention to the mind itself non-judgmentally. It also starts students on the journey of developing a "map of the mind," whereby they create for themselves the categories of their experience and how they relate to each other: attention, awareness, sensations, emotions, thoughts, reactions, and behaviors.

Learning to observe one's thoughts and emotions without immediate judgment and reaction serves to help create a "gap" between stimulus and response. This is very important for impulse control. As Viktor Frankl, author of the classic work *Man's Search for Meaning*, writes, "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom."

A Note on the Term "Mindfulness"

The term "mindfulness" has become very popular over the past decade and is now applied to a variety of things and a variety of practices, many of them quite distinct from historical origins. One of the most popular definitions of mindfulness describes it as a type of non-judgmental awareness of the present moment. Many have argued over whether mindfulness is a spiritual practice, a secular one, or both; or whether it necessarily involves meditation or can be cultivated without meditation. Because of this ongoing debate, SEE Learning chooses to focus more specifically on attention, a faculty that everyone has, and that has been closely studied by psychology and neuroscience for decades. While some may question the universality of the term "mindfulness," there is no question about the universality of attention.

In some mindfulness programs, mindfulness is described as present-moment non-judgmental awareness. In SEE Learning, mindfulness refers to the ability to remain mindful of something of value, to keep it in mind, and to not forget it or be distracted from it. It is similar to the idea of retention.

For example, if one needs to remember one's keys, it is mindfulness that helps one do so; if one forget one's keys, it is because one had a lapse of mindfulness. More importantly, students will later learn that one can also be mindful of one's values and commitments; indeed, this is vital to developing ethical literacy. Mindfulness is one of the key things that helps us stay true to our values and act accordingly, whereas "forgetting ourselves" is a common cause of acting out of alignment with our values.

SEE Learning also retains the term "mindfulness" in describing well-known practices such as "mindful listening," "mindful walking," etc., because they are common conventions. If your school prefers, however, you can substitute other terms such as "active or attentive listening," "attentive eating," or "attentive walking." Whichever term you find best for your situation, what is important is that students come to understand the value of cultivating attention and using that attention to develop discernment with regard to their internal and external situations.

Student Personal Practice

Like any skill, attention training takes time and repeated practice. This practice can be informal, such as having an intention to pay attention to what one is doing in general, or they can be more formal. A number of reflective practices are included here as examples of formal practice, and you can focus on the ones that your students enjoy most. You can start with very short sessions of only a few minutes each and then gradually build up as appropriate for your class. It is likely that the more familiar your students are with the practices in Chapter 2, "Building Resilience," the easier it will be for them to engage in the attention training practices of this chapter. It is suggested that you begin your practices first with a grounding / resourcing activity and then move into an attention training activity. Remember that just as with the practices of Chapter 2, student preferences with regard to individual practices may differ. Be open to students choosing an attention training practice that best fits them.

Like any skill, attention can be cultivated but will take time. Although there are 6 learning experiences in this chapter, your students are unlikely to gain proficiency in the skills and practices in only 6 sessions. Repetition is essential, and patience is a virtue. Be on the lookout for students sharing their experiences of insights or gained proficiency that may come from the practices you are doing with them. For example, a student may share that they reacted differently to a tense situation or noticed something different in their emotions or thoughts. These are common experiences when one begins to cultivate attention and pay more attention to one's mind.

Teacher Personal Practice

Your own personal practice of attention training and mindfulness will give you more confidence when leading your students, particularly when it comes to the reflective practices. There are a host of resources online for cultivating a personal mindfulness or focused attention practice, and the SEE Learning website will include recommendations of such resources.

Further Reading and Resources

For further reading on neuroplasticity and attention training, we recommend Sharon Begley's book, *Train Your Mind Change Your Brain*.

Letter to Parents and Caregivers



Date: _____

Dear Parent or Caregiver,

This letter is to inform you that your child is now starting **SEE Learning, Chapter 3, “Strengthening Awareness and Attention.”**

In Chapter 3, your child will explore the topic of attention and learn techniques for strengthening attention. Attention is absolutely crucial for learning, and children are often told to pay attention, but are rarely taught how to do so. In addition to providing specific practices to enhance attention, this chapter also explores how one can learn to pay better attention not only to external things, but also to one’s own mind, thoughts, sensations, and emotions.

Home Practice

As your child goes through this chapter, it will be helpful for you to talk about what it feels like to pay attention and how you decide what to pay attention to in your body, mind, and environment. You may also share strategies you use when you find it difficult to pay attention to something. Feel free to ask your child what they are learning, discussing, and practicing related to attention. Point out moments when your child is able to pay attention well and explore with them what it is that enables them to do so (such as level of interest, familiarity, or other factors).

Early Chapters Included

- Chapter 1 explored the concepts of kindness and compassion and how they relate to happiness and well-being.
- Chapter 2 explored practices for regulating the body and nervous system to enhance resilience to stress and well-being.

Further Reading and Resources

Train Your Mind Change Your Brain by Sharon Begley.

SEE Learning resources are available on the web at: www.compassion.emory.edu.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

Teacher/Educator Signature

Teacher/Educator Printed Name: _____

Teacher/Educator Contact Info: _____



Center for
Contemplative Science and
Compassion-Based Ethics

EMORY UNIVERSITY

Exploring the Mind

PURPOSE

This learning experience uses a story and a “mind jar” to explore what goes on in our minds. In SEE Learning, “mind” is a broad category that involves our first-person experience of the world, including feelings, emotions, thoughts, memories, hopes and fears, our imagination, and so on. The mind is

also what we use to pay attention to - or to be mindful of - things. Students also create two illustrated mind jars of their own in groups to show what might be in their minds when they are feeling stirred up and anxious, as opposed to when they are feeling calmer and more relaxed.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Explore what we mean by “mind” and the ways we can categorize mental experience.
- Learn that our mind can be relatively clear or cloudy, making it easier or harder to discern what is happening in our minds.
- Learn that we can calm and stabilize the mind by allowing it to relax and settle.
- Explore the similarities we share with regard to our minds and mental experiences.

LENGTH

25 minutes

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



**Attention &
Self-Awareness**

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Water in a large, clear glass (pint) jar with lid
- Small containers with sand, pebbles, small glass stones, or glitter if available (or other materials with some that sink and some that float)
- Spoon to stir with
- A small stool or table to put the jar on at eye level so the class can watch it

CHECK-IN | 3 minutes

- *“Let’s start with some resourcing. If you like you can take out a resource from your resource kit or you can just imagine your resource.*
- *If someone did something kind for your recently, or if you were compassionate to someone else, you can feel free to use that as your resource.*
- *If you’d rather do grounding, you can find a comfortable way to sit or something comfortable to hold or touch.*
- *Let’s now take a few moments to think about our resource or pay attention to our grounding. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s do tracking and pay attention to the sensations inside our bodies.*
- *If you find a pleasant or neutral sensation just pay attention to that and watch it. See if it changes or stays the same. [Pause.]*
- *If you haven’t found a pleasant or neutral sensation, see if you can shift to another part of your body to find a place that feels better. [Pause.]*
- *What did you notice?”*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 12 minutes

The Mind Jar

Overview

In this insight activity, your class will explore what we mean by “mind” through a story and the use of a “mind jar.” A mind jar is a large

transparent jar of water to which you can add sand, pebbles, and other things that can float in the water and make it cloudy, but eventually settle down if left undisturbed, leaving the water clear. The mind jar serves as a visual metaphor for how our minds become clearer when we let them settle.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- There are many things that go on in our minds, including thoughts, emotions, memories, feelings, hopes, fears, and more.
- When agitated, our minds can become cloudy, making it hard for us to see what is going on inside us or around us. Even pleasant sensations/thoughts/emotions can cause our minds to become cloudy instead of calm.
- We can cultivate greater clarity of mind by not agitating it and instead developing focus and attention.
- When our mind is calm, things in our mind become more clear. We feel calmer; we learn more easily; we make better decisions; and our body feels more settled.
- We can stir our mind up (agitation, confusion, rumination) or let it settle.

Materials Required

- Water in a large, clear glass (pint) jar with lid
- Small containers with sand, pebbles, small glass stones, or glitter if available (or other materials with some that sink and some that float)

- A spoon to stir with
- A small stool or table to put the jar on at eye level so the class can watch it

Instructions

- Review the zones that were introduced in Chapter 2: the resilient zone, the high zone, and the low zone.
- Place a large plastic or glass jar with water on a table or in a place where it is clearly visible. Invite your students to join you sitting in a circle or in a way that everyone can see the jar.
- Show the students how clear the water is and how easy it is to see through.
- What do you notice about the water now?
- I'm going to tell you a story about a girl called Theresa. For this story, we will be using this jar to show what is happening in Theresa's mind. Can you see clearly through it? We're going to use sand, pebbles, and glitter. Sand will be for neutral things, pebbles for challenging things, and glitter for nice things.
- Tell a "Clear-Muddy Mind" story (a sample story is provided below). Add the materials into the jar yourself, or invite your students to add them, at appropriate times (here marked by letters in the story).
S = Sand
P = Pebbles
G = Glitter

Or substitute other appropriate substances for neutral, challenging, and nice things. As

the story goes on and your students start to understand the process, you can ask them what substance to add after each sentence

Teaching Tips

- This activity uses the mind jar in conjunction with a story (you can make one up or use the story provided below).
- It is highly recommended that you test out your mind jar before doing this activity with your class.
- You can vary the substances you put inside.
- When left on its own, ideally the substances in the mind jar will sink within a minute or two, resulting in the cloudy liquid becoming clear.
- You can use a snow globe, but you lose the opportunity for class participation and the chance to show different mental activities (thoughts, feelings).
- After you finish, keep the mind jar set up, as you will use it again in upcoming learning experiences.

SAMPLE CLEAR-MUDDY MIND STORY

- *"Here's Theresa's mind when she first opens her eyes.*
- *Theresa wakes up. (S)*
- *She likes to hear the quiet sound of the rain. It makes her feel cozy in bed. (G)*
- *Then she remembers: rain means they won't be playing outdoors today. She was really excited to go to the first day of practice after*

- school with her friend Nelson. Now she feels disappointed.(P)
- When she gets up, her sister is in the bathroom. (P)
 - And she can't find her favorite T-shirt! (P)
 - But she does manage to find her very favorite jeans . (G)
 - She gets dressed and goes to the kitchen. (S)
 - Her dad asks her if her homework is done. (S)
 - Oh, no! She remembers he didn't finish it. She was too busy playing. She feels worried.(P)
 - Her younger sister says happily "I did mine!" That just makes Theresa a bit annoyed but she doesn't show it. (P)
 - She takes out her pencil, pours milk in her cereal, and starts a math problem. (S)
 - Now her dad is reminding her sister to feed the dog. (S)
 - Theresa tries to pay attention to her math homework, but it's hard with all the noise around the house and the dog barking while it's being fed. (P)
 - When Theresa has done 3 math problems and eaten half of her cereal, her father says it's almost time to go. (P and swirl jar)
 - "Wait! I'm not done!" Theresa says. (P)
 - Her sister says, "You should have finished it last night!" (P and swirl jar)
 - That makes her a bit more angry. She wants to say something back to her sister, but she stops herself. (G)
 - Her sister jumps up and down happily and says. "I finished all my homework! I always finish mine!" (P)
 - That makes Theresa really upset. She can't hold it in anymore, so she says, "Be quiet!" angrily to her sister. Her sister looks shocked and starts to cry. (P)
 - "Theresa! That's no way to talk to your sister," her father says. He starts to comfort Theresa's sister. Theresa feels miserable. (P)
 - Theresa's dad looks at her homework and says, "It's time to go and fortunately you're almost done. You can finish it in the car. Come on." (G)
 - Theresa finishes her homework just in time while riding in the car. Also her dad doesn't seem angry any more. She feels so relieved. (G)
 - "Be kind to your sister," her dad tells her as he drops her off at school, "she's just a small kid." Theresa nods and says, "Yes, dad, I will." (G)"
-
- DEBRIEF** | 2 minutes
- "What happened in the story?"
 - How did Theresa feel at the beginning, middle and end?
 - What was challenging for her?

- *What was neutral for her?*
- *What was pleasant for her?*
- *What do we mean when we use the word “mind”?*
- *What are some of the things that take place in our mind that we can’t see with our senses?”*

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 4 minutes

Settling the Mind*

Overview

In this practice, students will practice keeping their attention on the mind jar for a short while as it settles. However, they also have the option of shifting their attention to their bodies – particularly to neutral or pleasant sensations – and keeping their attention on those sensations. Either way, the students will be cultivating attention.

Teaching Tips

It’s recommended that you start with very brief attention training exercises like this—even as short as a minute or two—and gradually build to longer sessions over weeks and months. Where the script says “Pause,” you can pause for as short as 8-12 seconds, or as long as you feel is comfortable for your students. It is also recommended that you allow students to shift to resourcing, grounding, or a Help Now! strategy as needed. This is because if students feel dysregulation in their bodies, asking them to still their bodies and focus their concentration on a particular thing can sometimes increase discomfort.

Sample script

- *“I’m going to talk you through this reflective practice and then we can share out at the end. Remember that you can always adjust your position to a better one, and you can always think about a resource or do grounding if you ever feel uncomfortable.*
- *The mind jar settles if we leave it alone and allow it to return to its natural state.*
- *I’m going to shake this jar and then we’ll just watch as it settles.*
- *When we watch (or listen) to something closely we call that “paying attention.” If we keep watching for a longer time, that’s called “keeping our attention” on whatever it is we’re watching. See if you can keep your attention on the jar as it settles.*
- *Let’s watch the jar quietly now. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice in your body as we just watch it and keep our attention on it?*
- *If you find a neutral or pleasant sensation in your body, then you can shift your attention to that if you like.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can do resourcing or grounding as we watch the mind jar. You can think of a resource from your resource kit. Maybe you’ll find a resource that helps your mind settle a bit, just like the mind jar is settling. [Pause.]*
- *Notice how the mind jar just slowly settles and becomes clearer when no one is stirring it or disturbing it. [Pause.]*

- *Remember that you can always adjust your position to a better one, and you can always think about a resource or do grounding if you ever feel uncomfortable. Otherwise, let's just keep watching the mind jar. Let's see what we notice in the mind jar and in our body."*
[Pause.]
-

DEBRIEF | 4 minutes

- *"What did you notice – in your mind or in your body - as you watched the jar settle?*
- *Who had a strategy or a way that helped you stay focused on the Mind Jar? Could you share it with the group?*
- *Do you think it helps us if our minds are calmer and more settled? What does it help us do?"*

Exploring Attention

PURPOSE

This learning experience introduces the concept of attention by using the visual metaphor of a flashlight. After discussing attention and its benefits, students play a game called “I Notice, I Wonder,” whereby they pass around a novel object while sharing what they notice about it, and then things they wonder

about it. This activity highlights how close attention reveals details and can make even a simple object interesting and also that we can each experience the same object in different ways. The learning experience concludes with a reflective practice for strengthening attention using a resource.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Explore the various things we mean by “attention” and its importance in learning.
- Learn key vocabulary related to attention.
- Explore the strengthening of attention as a skill.
- Learn that while we often perceive things differently, even when looking at the same thing.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Attention & Self-Awareness

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- The mind jar (for the check-in)
- A flashlight or other light source
- One or two small objects of curiosity, preferably ones that students are unlikely to have encountered before (such as a seashell, textile, wooden mask, honeycomb, bone, piece of rare fruit, etc.)
- A bag (optional)

LENGTH

35 minutes

A NOTE ON VOCABULARY

During these activities and over the course of subsequent learning experiences, it can be helpful to gradually introduce some of the following key terms about attention, which also prepare the students for a fuller “map of the mind” to come.

- **attention:** directing the senses or mind to one thing
- **to notice:** to be aware of something; to see something (not just with the eyes, but with any of the senses or the mind), especially something new
- **to observe:** to watch closely with the senses or mind so that we can notice things about it
- **to experience:** to sense or feel something directly
- **to concentrate:** to devote all of one’s attention to one thing
- **focus:** attention on a single thing or activity; a center of attention; like concentration
- **to judge (or make a judgment):** to form an opinion or decide if something is one way or another (such as good or bad)

CHECK-IN | 3 minutes

- *“Let’s begin by thinking about one of our resources.*
- *You can choose a resource from your resource kit, or think of a new one, or even imagine one.*

- *As you think of your resource, notice what happens in your body. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s try settling with the mind jar again. I’m going to shake the mind jar gently and we can allow our minds to settle as we watch it settle. We’ll just sit quietly and keep our attention on the mind jar, watching it.*
- *Remember that you can do grounding or return to your resource if it makes you feel more comfortable. Just be careful not to disturb anyone else as they settle.*
- *What did you notice as we settled with the mind jar?”*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 7 minutes

Attention with a Flashlight

Overview

In this insight activity, students will explore the concept of attention by using a flashlight as a visual metaphor for attention.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We can direct the flashlight of our attention to different things.
- What we “shine the light on” can seem more interesting, more important or more detailed.
- Our attention is like a muscle. It gets stronger as we use it.
- We can direct our attention and this helps us notice and learn new things.
- If we don’t pay attention, we may miss important things.

- We can pay attention with our senses and our mind. We can strengthen our attention like a muscle.
- When just observing and not judging, each of us may have different experiences, all of which are valid.

Materials Required

A flashlight or other light source

Instructions

- Dim the lights.
- Ask students to describe an object or part of the room seen in darkness, then again when a flashlight shines on it.
- Discuss how differently the room looks when we shine a light on it, how much more we can see and how the flashlight is like our attention.

Teaching Tips

- It's not necessary to make the room completely dark.
- As an alternative to the darkened room and the flashlight, use a bag with an unfamiliar object inside it and have students reach in and describe what they sense with their hands.

Sample script

- *"Today we're going to do some activities that will help us pay attention better.*
- *You already know a lot about paying attention. You've been doing it all your life. What does it mean to pay attention?*
- *How do we do that?*

- *What happens when we pay attention? Does anything happen in our bodies?*
- *Can anyone give an example of a time when you paid attention and noticed something important?*
- *What about a time when you didn't pay attention and missed something important?*
- *So attention helps us notice things, and some of those things might be very important. Attention can be so helpful. Let's try something. I'm going to dim the lights a bit."*

With the lights dimmed (but not too dark) first ask the students to describe something in a dark area. Then shine a flashlight (or some other light source) on that area and ask them to describe what they notice that they couldn't see before.

- *"What does the flashlight help us do?*
- *How about when I shine the light on something in particular, are the other objects in the dark still there, even though we can't see them?*
- *Right, they're there, but we can't see them as clearly.*
- *How can we use our minds like a flashlight? Can we pay attention to certain things closely or point our attention at them?*
- *Can we keep our attention on something, like holding a flashlight steady?*
- *Do we sometimes get distracted and lose attention? Let's see.*

- [Draw a circle on the whiteboard and tell students to pay close attention to it. Then, stand off to the side and make distracting motions and sounds.]
- *What was that like for you? What did you do with your attention?*
- *Do you think it's useful to be able to pay attention when you want to? Why?"*

If helpful, do a visual mapping of the word "attention" by writing it in the center of a piece of chart paper and inviting students to suggest other words related to attention. Feel free to do this with the other key terms if they came up in the conversation.

- *"Did you know we can strengthen our attention like a muscle if we practice? In that way, it's even better than a flashlight."*
- *Since attention is so useful, we're going to practice paying attention so we can get better at it. But we'll do it in some fun activities."*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 7 minutes

I Notice, I Wonder

Overview

In this insight activity, students further explore the concept of attention and practice non-judgmental noticing and wondering. This activity can be repeated many times.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- When we pay close attention to something we keep noticing new things about it.
- Everyone has their own perspective. We notice different things about the same object.
- When we look closely and just observe before making a judgment, there are no "right" answers, just different experiences.

Materials Required

- One or two small objects of curiosity, preferably ones that students are unlikely to have encountered before (such as a seashell, textile, wooden mask, honeycomb, bone, piece of rare fruit, etc.)
- A bag (optional)

Instructions

- Have ready an interesting object (possibilities - a pine cone or seed pod, a tool, a little known fruit or vegetable, a sea shell, perhaps something that connects to a class story or area of study).
- Explain that each student will have a chance to study the object carefully and say something they notice or wonder. The challenge is that they cannot repeat something someone else has already said. If this feels too hard, students can do this in smaller groups first and work up to whole class.
- Pass the object (hand-sized or smaller) from student to student.

- Encourage each child to begin with “I notice...” or “I wonder...”
- Alternatively, pass the object around in a bag and have each student reach in to feel it.

Teaching Tips

Continue to support students by reminding them that because we are just observing and sharing our experiences, there is no right or wrong answer. If a student wants to repeat something that has already been said, like “It’s brown,” invite them to elaborate, such as “It’s brown like chocolate” or “It’s very light brown” or “It’s as big as...” You may need to remind students also to keep paying attention to each other and the object, seeing if they can notice more and more of its features.

Sample Script

- *“Let’s all get into a circle for an activity on attention. It’s called “I Notice, I Wonder.”*
- *I have an object here that I will pass around. If you know what it is, don’t tell anyone what it is, and instead try to pretend you are seeing it for the first time.*
- *As the object goes around the circle, we’ll each look at it carefully. We can smell, touch, and listen to it too.*
- *So we’re going to pay close attention to it for a moment and observe it.*
- *Then offer one thing you notice or wonder to the group. We’ll pay attention to each other and to the object.*

- *It’s ok to say, “It reminds me of... It’s about as big as a.... The color is like.... I wonder where it came from...I wonder what it’s used for...”*
- *We aren’t going to name the object. We’re not going to say what it is until after we are finished with the activity. The challenge will be to not repeat someone else’s has already said.*
- *We don’t have to make a judgment about the object either. That means we don’t need to say if we like it or don’t like it.*
- *If you are stuck, you can say “pass”, and we can come back to you if you choose. And, there’s no right or wrong answer. Just notice something about this object and share that.*
- *Before you pass the object, model for students by starting yourself: Let’s try it. I’ll start. (Look at the object closely for a moment.) I notice the object is ... (insert descriptor).*
- *[Send the object around the circle. When the object has been around once, do a second round in which students can state a “notice” or a “wonder.” Model a “wonder” this time.]*
- *Remember, there are no right or wrong answers, just your own experience. Listen carefully to what other people wonder.”*
- *[Send the object around the circle.]*

DISCUSSION

- *“Did anyone hear someone else say something that you were thinking too?”*

- *Did someone say something you hadn't noticed or wondered about yourself?*
- *Who can add one more thing they notice? Or wonder? Could we keep on noticing and wondering about more and more things?*
- *I noticed there were no wrong answers. Why do you think that is? (We're describing our own experiences, not opinions or judgments.) Do you think there's a right or wrong way to experience this object?*
- *Did anyone get distracted? Did you ever lose attention for a moment? Were you able to bring your attention back to the group and the object?*
- *Write or share as a whole group what this felt like:*
 - Where did you feel sensations in your bodies?
 - What were these sensations?
 - Why might this activity be helpful when thinking about attention or why did we do it?"

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 10 minutes

Individual Practice with Writing*

Overview

In this independent writing activity, students practice attention training by finding interesting things about a particular object. This helps reinforce the idea that our ability to stay focused on something is also related to our ability to find interest in that thing.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- When we pay close attention to something we keep noticing new details about it.
- Our attention is like a muscle. It gets stronger as we use it.
- We can direct our attention and this helps us notice and learn new things.

Materials Required

- An object for each child (or enough to share)
- SEE Journals
- Writing utensils

Instructions

- Give each student one object or organize groups to share.
- Tell them to select an interesting thing about the object that they notice or wonder about and to write about that quality. If there is enough time, they can select other interesting things and write about those.
- After 2-3 minutes of writing, ask students to discuss the experience as a whole group:
 - What was that like for you?
 - Did you notice your attention wandering? How did you notice it? How did you bring it back?

Teaching Tips

- This activity could be done on a different day from the other insight activities.

- Remind students that if they notice their attention wandering, notice it, then bring it back without judgment.
- The amount of writing time can be varied based on age and number of times done.
- To scaffold for learning differences, you may want to provide specific questions for students to answer rather than the open-ended prompt above.

Sample script

- *"Who can remind us what we did with the flashlight? How did we connect the flashlight to our attention?"*
- *And what about when we passed around [the object], what did we talk about during that activity?"*
- *So what we're going to do now is similar to those activities. We are going to do some individual writing that helps us practice focusing our attention.*
- *I'm going to give you an object and then ask you to examine it and write for [5-10] minutes about one thing that you notice about the object. Then write about one thing that you wonder about the object. When you think you are finished writing, try to write one more sentence.*
- *If you feel your attention wandering, just notice that, and bring it back without judgment.*
- *When we're finished writing individually, we'll discuss the experience as a group.*

- [Distribute SEE Learning Journals and objects for students.]
- *Please begin writing now.*
- [After the writing time is over, facilitate the group discussion.]
- *Ok, let's stop writing and discuss what that was like for you.*
- *Did you notice your attention wandering? How did you notice it? How did you bring it back?"*

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 5 minutes

Settling the Mind with a Resource*

Overview

In this reflective practice, students will choose one of their resources from their resource kits and will use it as an object of focus for a brief attention practice. This is identical to resourcing, except that here you are using the resource or the sensations that arise as an object to sustain attention on.

Instructions

Use the script below to facilitate this reflective practice.

Teaching Tips

- As before, make sure you give students the option of shifting their attention to another resource, to grounding, or to a pleasant or neutral sensation in their bodies should they ever feel uncomfortable from trying to focus their attention. Allow them to move slightly

and adjust their posture also, as long as they are careful not to distract or disturb other students.

- As before, where the script says “Pause,” you can pause for as short as 8-12 seconds, or as long as you feel is comfortable for your students.

Sample script

- *“Let’s practice strengthening our attention just a little bit. We’re going to do it with a resource, just like we’ve been doing, except this time we’re going to hold our attention a bit longer.*
- *To help us concentrate, we’re going to keep our eyes on the ground or close them and we’re going to sit up straight but in a comfortable way.*
- *I’ll talk you through the practice and we can share out after.*
- *Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let’s bring our resource to mind. And let’s see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly.*
[Pause.]
- *If you feel a neutral or pleasant sensation in the body, you can pay attention to that. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we’re going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments.* [Pause.]

- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource.*
[Pause.]
- *Whenever you notice that you got distracted and you forgot about your resource, you can bring your mind back to your resource.*
[Pause for a longer time, such as 15-30 seconds or longer.]
- *Let’s finish now. You can open your eyes.*
- *What did you notice this time, when we paid attention to our resource a bit longer?*
- *Were you able to pay attention?*
- *What did you do when you lost your attention or got distracted?”*

DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- *“Have you learned anything about attention that you found interesting?*
- *How else might it help us if we practiced attention and got better at it?”*

Cultivating Attention in Activities: Part 1

PURPOSE

This learning experience introduces three concepts : (1) “awareness” of what is going on in our mind, our bodies, and around us; (2) “heedfulness” of things that could be dangerous or harmful; and (3) “mindfulness” of what we are trying to do or accomplish without distraction and without forgetting what we

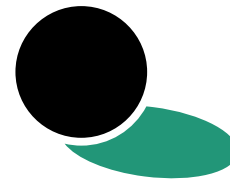
are doing. These aspects of attention not only allow us to maintain our focus and learn better, they also help us catch emotional impulses before they create problems for ourselves and others: that is, catching the spark before it becomes a forest fire.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Further explore the term “attention” and the benefits of strengthening attention.
- Learn we can pay attention to things on the inside (our body and mind).
- Be introduced to the terms “mindfulness” “awareness,” and “heedfulness.”
- Learn to catch impulses before they cause us problems, like catching a spark before it becomes a forest fire.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Attention & Self-Awareness

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Chart paper and markers
- A piece of chart paper or a whiteboard with the word “attention” written in the center and the words “mindfulness,” “awareness” and “heedfulness” written around it
- Heedfulness scenarios printed-out (provided at and of learning experience)
- For optional insight activity: 4 oz cups (small cups work best because there is limited space for holding)
- A water source and towel for spills

LENGTH

40 minutes

CHECK-IN | 3 minutes

- *“We’ve been learning how to pay attention and how to strengthen our attention like a muscle. Can anyone think of a time recently when you had to pay close attention? What was that like?”*
- *Maybe you can think of a time when you had to pay attention, but it was hard because there were a lot of distractions, but you still paid attention. Who has a moment that they can share?*
- *Remember when we used the flashlight? How was that like what we had to do when we wanted to pay attention but there were things that got in the way?*
- *What are some of the things attention helps us to do?*
- *Let’s take a moment to calm our bodies and minds so that we can be ready to pay attention. Take a comfortable posture, one that is relaxed but that will help you keep your attention here.*
- *Now let’s do grounding or resourcing. If you’re doing grounding, notice the how your body is touching the floor or chair or some other place. Then notice pleasant or neutral sensations and keep your attention there for a few moments.*
- *If you’re doing resourcing, bring your resource to mind and see if you can keep your attention on your resource for a few moments.*

- *If you ever feel uncomfortable, you can shift to a pleasant or neutral sensation in your body and focus on that instead. [Pause 15-30 seconds or longer as your students are able.]*
- *What did you notice this time?”*

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 8 minutes

What is Attention and What is it For?

Overview

- This discussion is for exploring what attention is, what we can pay attention to, and what the benefits of attention are.
- You will create a further word map for the word “attention,” this time to explore: (1) the various things we can pay attention to, (2) what we pay attention with (our senses, our body, and our mind), and (3) what the benefits of attention are.
- The students have already been paying attention to things on the inside through the practice of “tracking” their sensations. Here you can expand it to include paying attention to things on the inside that include the mind and aren’t limited to sensations. Some examples are: a piece of music stuck in one’s head; daydreaming; getting lost in a particular thought or memory; picturing something imaginary in one’s mind, such as when resourcing; worrying about something then realizing it’s going to be okay; and so on.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Just as we can pay attention to outside things with our senses, we can pay attention to what's going on inside us (sensations, thoughts, feelings, etc).
- Attention supports learning and can be strengthened.
- We can learn to catch impulses before they cause us problems.

Materials Required

- Markers
- A piece of chart paper or a whiteboard with the word "attention" written in the center (Later you will add the words "mindfulness," "awareness," and "heedfulness" written around it.)

Instructions

- Co-create a word map by writing the word "attention" in the middle and then writing out other words that students suggest around it, connected with lines or arrows.
- Divide the large group into small groups of 3-4.
 - Assign each group one or more of the following questions:
 - *"What are things on the outside that we pay attention to and what are things on the inside?"*
 - *What do we use to pay attention and how do we do it (what does it look and feel like)?*

- *Why is important to pay attention, what would it be like if we couldn't/didn't, what could happen?"*
- Tell each group to make a thought map of their answer(s).
- Facilitate sharing of each group to a shared thought map for the whole class.
- Alternatively, complete this activity as a whole group.
 - Ask students what things on the outside we can pay attention to. Write those suggestions in a list entitled Outside.
 - Ask students what we use to pay attention to those things on the outside. Write these senses near the Outside list.
 - Ask students what things on the inside we can pay attention to. Write those suggestions in a list entitled Inside.
 - Ask students what we use to pay attention to those things on the inside. Write these suggestions (mind, body, attention) near the Inside list.
 - Ask students why it is important to pay attention to these things, on the inside and the outside. Write the benefits they suggest.
 - Ask students to consider what it might be like if we couldn't pay attention at all. Discuss.
 - Remind and reinforce that everyone can pay attention and we can all strengthen our attention like a muscle with practice.

Teaching Tips

Save the thought maps or take photos of them for later reference.

Sample script

- *“What do we mean when we say “pay attention”?”* (Write down students responses around the word attention.)
- *Can we pay attention to things on the outside and on the inside?*
- *What are things on the outside that we can pay attention to? Things outside of us.* (For example, the room, the sound of a fire truck, other people. Write these on a list under the word “Outside”.)
- *What do we use to pay attention to those things?* (Our senses, our eyes, ears, etc. Write these near the same list)
- *What are things on the inside we can pay attention to?* (Sensations, being hungry, thoughts, emotions, feelings, worries, memories, our activities. Write these on a list under the word “Inside”.)
- *What do we use to pay attention to these things on the inside?* (Our body, our mind, our attention.)
- *Why is it important to pay attention to these things?* (If you like, list benefits on another piece of chart paper.)
- *What would it be like if we couldn’t pay attention at all? What might happen?*

- *Fortunately, everyone can pay attention and we can all strengthen our attention like a muscle with practice.”*
-

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 10 minutes

The Story of Ben

Overview

In this activity you’ll review a story that gives an example of paying attention to one’s activities, and then discuss it with your students to gradually introduce the concepts of “mindfulness,” “awareness,” and “heedfulness.” You’ll also help them make a list of examples of things we might need to be heedful of.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We can learn to catch impulses before they cause us problems.
- Awareness and attention can be strengthened with practice.
- There are things that it’s helpful to be heedful of.

Materials Required

- One of the stories (provided below)
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Markers

Instructions

- Students who had SEE Learning in previous years may already know the Story of Ben. Remind students of the story or re-read the story to your class.

- Review the ideas of “heedfulness” and “awareness.”
- Have kids brainstorm times during which they were or were not heedful. This brainstorm can be whole group or individual.
- Brainstorm a general list of what things it’s good to be heedful of or careful about.
- Select two or three ideas from that list and write about why it’s helpful to be heedful of those things.
- Invite students to share with the whole group if they wish.

Teaching Tips

- The story can be fun to act out by yourself or with your students. For example, you can stretch out one hand and then catching hold of it with your other hand at the appropriate time. Feel free to alter details or replace the story with one that you feel may be more suitable for your students, as long as it exemplifies paying attention to the mind and catching a habitual tendency before it becomes problematic.
- Help students start brainstorming with a funny one, such as: Ms. Austin was walking in her backyard, thinking about a lot of things other than where she was going, and she forgot to look out for dog poop (or a dirty puddle) and stepped in it!

The Story of Ben

“Once there was a fellow called Ben. When he was younger, Ben had a bad habit of just taking things that didn’t belong to him. Some people even called him a thief. But when he grew a bit older he stopped doing that. He decided that he shouldn’t steal from people, because if he did, they would be hurt and it would be hard to be friends with them. One day while out walking, Ben was invited in by some friends for a meal. While sitting at the table, he noticed the food in front of him, and while his friends were away, he quickly reached out to take some of the food with one hand to put into his pockets. Suddenly he caught himself, and his other hand quickly grabbed hold of the arm that was about to steal the food. “Stop! Thief! I’ve caught you!” he shouted loudly. His hosts rushed in, surprised. “What’s going on? Where’s the thief?” they asked. “It’s Ben!” he shouted, holding his own arm tightly. “Ben is the thief!””

Alternative story: The Boy and the Acorns

“A boy in school was playing and throwing acorns. He was throwing them away from other children, over the playground fence, when a car came by. He hit the car with the acorn. The driver got out and was upset. “Why did you throw something at my car?” she asked. The boy was in tears. He said, “My hand just threw it before my mind knew it was a bad idea.” The driver nodded and she said, “Don’t worry. I used to do things like that too. With practice, you can learn to catch yourself before you do something that could be dangerous. It’s called heedfulness.””

Sample script for use with *The Story of Ben*

- *“What happened in this story?”*
- *Who was Ben talking to when he said, “Stop! Thief! I’ve caught you!”?*
- *Why were the other people surprised when they walked in and heard Ben say that?*
- *What did Ben do without thinking about it?*
- *At what moment did Ben become aware that he was doing something that might get him into trouble? We could say that at that moment he had awareness – he realized what he was going to do.*
- *We can have awareness of things on the outside by seeing them or hearing them. Can we also have awareness of things on the inside? Can we have awareness of what we’re doing?*
- *Ben knew that stealing was dangerous. When you know something could be dangerous, you have “heedfulness.” It means to be very careful.*
- *What are things we need to be careful around or heedful of if we are in the kitchen?*
- *What was Ben heedful of? Did it work?*
- *If Ben hadn’t practiced being heedful, what do you think would have happened? What would have happened if he just stole the food without catching himself in time?*
- *Let’s take some time for individual writing [or in small groups].*

- *Brainstorm a list of things it’s good to be heedful of or careful about.*
- *Select two or three ideas from your list and write about why would it help to be heedful of those things. We’ll take some time to share if you like after writing.”*
- [Provide time for students to share.]

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 14 minutes

Using Heedfulness and Awareness for Different Outcomes

Overview

Students will look at familiar scenarios and determine where the main character could have used heedfulness or awareness to have a different outcome.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We can learn to catch impulses before they cause us problems.
- Awareness and attention can be strengthened with practice.
- There are things that it’s helpful to be heedful of.

Materials Required

- Print-outs of the “Heedfulness Scenarios,” provided at the end of this learning experience
- Chart paper or white board
- Markers

Instructions

- Divide your students into groups of 3 or 4 and give each group a scenario.
- Ask each group to read the scenario together.
- Ask each group to discuss the following questions about their assigned scenario:
 - What happens in the scenario?
 - At which points could the character have practiced heedfulness?
 - What could the character have done instead of what they actually did?
- Next, each group will plan to act out the scenario with heedfulness for the rest of the class. (Allow them about 4 or more minutes for this). Students can “play” the characters in the scenario, but they can also “play” sensations, emotions, or thoughts experienced.
- Bring the class back together and invite each group to act out their skit, while others observe.
- Only if you feel the acting may have been unclear, read the scenario aloud for the class so that it’s clear what happened.
- Ask the students who were watching to explain where they saw the character or characters practicing heedfulness.
- Move on to the next group, asking them to act out their scenario and repeat.

Teaching Tips

- Kids can do this in partnerships or small groups. Each group can get a copy of all scenarios or just one scenario.
- Remember to alter the names of the characters in the scenarios if they are the same as any of your students.
- Write the questions on the board or a piece of chart paper.
- Blank scenario cards are provided if you want to create your own, or you can allow your students to create their own custom scenarios

Heedfulness Scenarios

(These are also provided at the end of this learning experience as cards that you can print out.)

1. Rosa is playing soccer on the playground. Her team has not scored in some time, while the other team has. A lot of her friends are on the other team and keep smiling and getting excited when they score. The other team scores again and one of her friends jumps up and down and says “Yes, we are so good!” right next to Rosa. Rosa pushes her friend to the ground.
2. Martin loves being helpful. He is often the first to offer to help anyone, even if he is in the middle of something else. One day during writing, he noticed a friend could not reach a material she needed. “I’ll help you,” Martin called from across the room. He raced over, grabbed a chair, and quickly stood on

the chair to grab the material. In his haste, he did not realize the chair was not stable, and he fell to the ground, hurting his wrist.

3. Oskar had the best weekend. He and his best friend had a sleepover, he played basketball, and he ate at his favorite restaurant. During Monday morning at school, everyone gets to share about their weekend and he couldn't wait. It was another classmate's turn, and she was sharing about her sleepover. Oskar immediately interrupted his classmate by blurting out, "I had a sleepover too and I played basketball, and I ate at my favorite restaurant!"
4. Jadon and his class were doing a project that required them to build a sturdy but tall structure out of toothpicks and marshmallows. When everyone was done, the class walked around to each structure to look at how different they were and let each other explain their structures. In his excitement to have the best spot to see, Jadon tripped over another child and knocked a structure over.
5. Emerson was really hungry and was helping her mom make pasta. While her mom was not looking, Emerson used a spoon and grabbed a noodle out of the boiling pasta water. She quickly put it in her mouth, realizing too late how hot it was.
6. Tenzin really wanted to make sure he got a seat next to his friends in the cafeteria, so that they could talk about and look at the

comic book that he had brought, which was under his arm. His tray was piled high with food, and he decided to also balance his drink on top of it so he wouldn't have to go back to get it. On his way to the table where his friends were, he dropped his tray.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 5 minutes

Settling the Mind with a Resource*

This reflective practice is the same as that in the previous learning experience. You are encouraged to do this practice on a regular basis with your students to strengthen the muscle of attention.

Sample script

- *"Let's practice training our attention just a little bit. We're going to do it with a resource, just like we've been doing, except this time we're going to hold our attention a bit longer.*
- *To help us concentrate, we're going to keep our eyes on the ground or close them.*
- *I'll talk you through the practice and we can share out after.*
- *Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one. Raise your hand when you have thought of the resource you want to focus on.*
- *Now let's just bring our resource to mind. And let's see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. [Pause.]*

- *If you feel a neutral or pleasant sensation in the body, you can pay attention to that. Or if you'd rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we're going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Whenever you notice that you got distracted and you forgot about your resource, you can bring your mind back to your resource. [Pause for a longer time, such as 15-30 seconds or longer.]*
- *Let's finish now. You can open your eyes."*

DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- *"What did you notice this time, when we paid attention to our resource a bit longer?*
- *Were you able to pay attention?*
- *What did you do when you lost your attention or got distracted?*
- *Is it getting easier or harder to pay attention as we practice? Do you notice any changes?*
- *Do you notice any difference in the class as a whole when we practice?"*

Allow students to share out or pass.

OPTIONAL INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 10 minutes

Pass the Cup

Overview

In this activity, students will pass around a cup filled almost to the brim with water in order to learn about attention. Begin by filling a cup almost to the brim or as full as you imagine your students can handle. The students should pass it hand to hand around the circle. You can pause them in the task to notice what sensations they feel in their bodies as the cup comes closer or it's their turn (tracking), then notice the sensations in their bodies as they watch others when their turn is over. As some students might get nervous while doing this, make sure to remind them that it's only water, and though you're going to try hard not to spill it, no harm will be done if it spills a little. This activity allows students to feel where heedfulness happens in their bodies and helps them monitor their attention.

Sample script

- *"Now we're going to use our attention the best we can with a little game.*
- *Let's all get into a circle."*

Pour the water very slowly into a 4oz paper cup.

- *"Did anyone notice that they started paying closer attention as I poured the water? Did you notice what you were thinking?*
- *We're going to pass this cup around the circle and try not to spill any of the water.*
- *There are a couple of important things to remember:*

1. *Try to keep your mind on the cup. When we do something and pay close attention to it, keeping our mind right on it, we call that mindfulness. It's not a race. Go as slowly as you need to.*
2. *As you watch the cup going around the circle, see if you can notice how your body and mind reacts as it gets closer to you. Noticing what's going on inside us is awareness: we are paying attention to things on the inside.*
3. *By being careful not to spill, we're practicing heedfulness. But if it does spill, it's only water, so don't be disturbed if a little gets spilled.*

- *Okay, let's begin!"*

Start passing the cup slowly around the room. After 3 or 4 students have passed the cup, remind students to check-in with their bodies:

- *"Notice what you feel on the inside as you watch the cup move around the circle.*
- *If there are any thoughts or feelings in your mind, notice those too. This is practicing awareness."*

When the passing is complete, give everyone a moment at to reflect on their experience. Ask them to consider how they felt while watching as well as passing. Here are some sample questions you can use to facilitate a discussion about the activity:

- *"Before we share, take a moment to yourself, and think about how it felt for you during the*

passing the cup game. What did you notice on the inside?

- *Who would like to share what they noticed on the inside. (Good! So you had awareness.)*
- *Who could feel sensations in their body when other people were passing the cup? What did you feel and where? (Good! So you had awareness of that too.)*
- *Did you notice any moments when you lost your attention, when your attention went to something else? What distracted you?*
- *How were you able to practice mindfulness by keeping your attention on the cup? What helped you pay attention?*
- *Who was practicing heedfulness by trying not to spill the cup? Raise your hand.*
- *Were you able to bring your mind back to the cup if you lost your attention?*
- *What are some other times when you pay close attention like this?*
- *This game is really good practice for other things that need our attention. Can you think of some?"*

Your students may want to try again. As an option, you can try with two cups going in opposite directions at the same time.

OPTIONAL INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 10 minutes

Mirroring

Overview

- This activity involves two people mirroring each other's arm movements, first with one playing the role of leader and the other following and mimicking and then switching roles. It is helpful if you've practiced this yourself in advance. You can also practice with a student first so that the two of you can demonstrate for the entire class.
- The exercise often leads to momentary experiences of close attunement, which demonstrates an aspect of focused attention: namely that our mind and body become "merged" in the activity and we lose track of other things around us. Some students may experience a state of "flow" and often it is possible to lose track of who is leading, and who following.

Leading the Activity

If you like, demonstrate with a student and yourself first. Then divide the class into pairs, with an A and B. Pairs stand, facing each other holding their hands up as if they were only an inch from a mirror.

- *"Let's begin by feeling the energy between your hands. We're going to do this activity in silence so that we can pay attention and use our mindfulness fully. We will talk together about the experience afterwards."*
- *Partner A can now begin to move one hand very slowly. Partner B is going to*

use mindfulness to follow and mirror the movement as exactly as you can. Partner B, you're going to match everything about A's hand as if you were an exact mirror.

- *Now Partner A can move the other hand very slowly, and Partner B, you follow the movement, paying close attention with mindfulness.*
- *Now try moving both hands away and back, up and down. Move freely but slowly.*
- *Now let's use our awareness to notice what's happening in our mind and body right now."*

Give them a few minutes to do the mirroring, then let them switch roles with the student who was mirroring becoming the leader. If there is time, you can ask them to try changing their body shape slightly, for example balancing on one foot, shifting their weight, or turning a little to the side so that they are not facing each other straight on. If any partnership has become particularly comfortable working together, it can be fun to ask them to choose secretly who is the leader and who the mirror. Then let the class try to guess.

After playing the game, prompt your students with questions like the ones for the Pass the Cup activity, such as:

- *"Remember we said our attention is like a flashlight. What were we shining the flashlight on just now?"*
- *What was happening in your body and mind? What were you aware of?*

- *What are some other times when you pay close attention like this?*
- *This game is really good practice for other things that need our attention. Can you think of some?"*

Scenario Cards

1. Rosa is playing soccer on the playground. Her team has not scored in some time, while the other team has. A lot of her friends are on the other team and keep smiling and getting excited when they score. The other team scores again and one of her friends jumps up and down and says "Yes, we are so good!" right next to Rosa. Rosa pushes her friend to the ground.
2. Martin loves being helpful. He is often the first to offer to help anyone, even if he is in the middle of something else. One day during writing, he noticed a friend could not reach a material she needed. "I'll help you," Martin called from across the room. He raced over, grabbed a chair, and quickly stood on the chair to grab the material. In his haste, he did not realize the chair was not stable, and he fell to the ground, hurting his wrist.
3. Oskar had the best weekend. He and his best friend had a sleepover, he played basketball, and he ate at his favorite restaurant. During Monday morning at school, everyone gets to share about their weekend and he couldn't wait. It was another classmate's turn, and she was sharing about her sleepover. Oskar immediately interrupted his classmate by blurting out, "I had a sleepover too and I played basketball, and I ate at my favorite restaurant!"

4. Jadon and his class were doing a project that required them to build a sturdy but tall structure out of toothpicks and marshmallows. When everyone was done, the class walked around to each structure to look at how different they were and let each other explain their structures. In his excitement to have the best spot to see, Jadon tripped over another child and knocked a structure over.

5. Emerson was really hungry and was helping her mom make pasta. While her mom was not looking, Emerson used a spoon and grabbed a noodle out of the boiling pasta water. She quickly put it in her mouth, realizing too late how hot it was.

6. Tenzin really wanted to make sure he got a seat next to his friends in the cafeteria, so that they could talk about and look at the comic book that he had brought, which was under his arm. His tray was piled high with food, and he decided to also balance his drink on top of it so he wouldn't have to go back to get it. On his way to the table where his friends were, he dropped his tray.

Cultivating Attention in Activities: Part 2

PURPOSE

The purpose of this learning experience is to show what the cultivation of attention looks like when applied to simple activities like listening, eating, or walking, which are mildly but not overly stimulating, before transitioning to even more neutral things like the breath and writing. It also introduces the idea of “the spark and the

forest fire” as an analogy for how our feelings and impulses can get out of control and cause problems for us if we do not pay attention to them with heedfulness and address them in time. There are many activities included here, so feel free to split the learning experience into multiple sessions.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Notice that the training of attention can be involved in any activity we do.
- Practice mindful eating.
- Practice mindful walking, including how to lead the activity.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



**Attention &
Self-Awareness**

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Provided scenario
- A picture of a spark and a forest fire (provided at the end of this chapter)
- A chime or bell
- Optional: small food or snack items such as grapes, raisins, grape tomatoes, or crackers with enough for two items per student; napkins; a clear open space where your students can walk in a circle together

LENGTH

40 minutes

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“We’ve been learning how to pay attention. What are some things you have learned about attention?”*
- *Have you been noticing people paying attention or not paying attention? Would anyone like to share an example?*
- *Have you thought of any other things that attention helps us to do? Since yesterday, can you share one time you used your attention?*
- *Let’s take a moment to calm our bodies and minds so that we can pay attention for the activities we’re about to do. Take a comfortable posture, one that is relaxed but that will help you keep your attention here. Let’s lower or close our eyes.*
- *Let’s do grounding or resourcing. First, take a moment to think of one of your resources that you would like to use to help you today. Raise your left hand when you have thought of your resource. Let’s begin. If you’re doing grounding, notice the contact of your body with the floor or chair or some other contact.*
- *If you’re doing resourcing, bring your resource to mind.*
- *If you ever feel uncomfortable, you can shift to a pleasant or neutral sensation in your body and focus on that instead. [Pause 15-30 seconds or longer as your students are able.]*
- *What did you notice on the inside?”*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 8 minutes

The Spark and the Forest Fire

Overview

In this insight activity, students review the metaphor of the spark and the forest fire as representations of feelings and impulses through reading a scenario. Then they discuss some times when they practiced heedfulness themselves.

Content/Insights to be Explored:

- Feelings and impulses can be like sparks that quickly grow to a forest fire if we don’t catch them in time.
- It is important to notice our sparks and address them before they become fires, and that can be helped through strengthening our attention and awareness muscles.
- When it’s still a spark, a fire is easy to put out and even a child can do it. Once it’s a forest fire, it lasts until it burns itself out.

Materials Required

- Scenario, provided below
- Pictures of spark and forest fire (provided at end of learning experience)

Instructions

- Ask students to help remind each other of the spark/forest fire metaphor. Show students a picture or video of a forest fire. (Script below if needed.)
- Share the story provided below.

- Give students a few moments to reflect and think about the story. Then ask the group:
 - What happened in the story?
 - What was the spark for the main character?
 - What could happen next if he doesn't catch the spark?
 - What might he do to catch his spark?
 - How can we benefit from catching our sparks?
 - How can we help others by catching our sparks?

Teaching Tips

- You can write the main character's thoughts on the board with arrows connecting them to show how one leads to another.
- You can also share with your students the graphic novel *Sparks!* provided in the supplementary materials to SEE Learning or a similar story that illustrates the concept of the spark of a feeling becoming a forest fire or someone catching it before that happens.

Sample script

- *"Who knows what is happening here? (Show picture of forest fire.)*
- *Does anyone know how a forest fire gets started? How big is the fire when it first starts?*
- *How would you put out the spark or small flame when it's just getting started? Who could do that?*

- *What about when it's really big like this? How would you put it out? Is it harder to put out when it's a big forest fire like that?*
- *We've been talking about things on the inside, like our thoughts and feelings. How might our feelings be like a spark that turns into a forest fire?*
- *What happens when someone has a feeling and then it starts to get bigger and bigger, and suddenly they're feeling really angry or really unhappy?*
- *What could they have done if they caught that feeling when it was just a spark?*
- *How could we be careful or heedful of those sparks before they become forest fires?*
- *Let's read a short scenario together and talk a little more about this metaphor.*
- [After reading the scenario, ask:]
 - What happened in the story?
 - What was the spark for the main character?
 - What could happen next if he doesn't catch the spark?
 - What might he do to catch his spark?
- *Can you think of a time when you caught a spark before it became a forest fire? What did you do to help yourself?*
- *How can we benefit from catching our sparks?*
- *How can we help others by catching our sparks?"*

Sample scenario

"Louis got his math test back. He saw that he missed 3 problems and failed the test. He thought "I did terribly on this test, I'm terrible at math." Then he thought, "I am never going to be good at math, which means I'm not a good student and then I'm not going to get into college and get a good job and have a successful and happy life..." "

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 12 minutes

Mindful Listening*

Overview

In this practice students try mindful listening. This also serves as a grounding practice after discussing heedfulness and students' own examples, which could be activating for some.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We can pay attention to any activity.
- We notice more when we pay close attention.
- Attention can make things more vivid and interesting.
- Despite looking the same at first, each thing is unique and different in some way.
- Paying close attention can calm our body and mind.

Sample Script

- *"Find a comfortable place in the room. It may be more comfortable for you to close your eyes, but if not, you are also welcome to focus your eyes on the floor. Now, let's take two breaths to settle in.*
- *We are first going to focus on things that are far away from us. Open up your ears as big as you can. Can you find the farthest away sound? It is not important to identify the sound, just notice it.*
- *Now we are going to find the sounds happening inside the building.*
- *Let's bring it in even closer - notice the sounds happening inside the room.*
- *Finally, bring your hearing in as close as possible, what sounds do you hear inside your own body?*
- *Open your eyes, and come back: How do you feel? What zone do you feel in right now?*
- *What sensations do you notice in your body? Has your breathing changed?*
- *What other activities could we do together mindfully?"*

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 12 minutes

Mindful Writing*

Overview

In this practice, students try mindful writing.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We can pay attention to any activity.
- We notice more when we pay close attention.
- Attention can make things more vivid and interesting.
- Despite looking the same at first, each thing is unique and different in some way.
- Paying close attention can calm our body and mind.

Materials Required

- SEE Learning journals
- Writing utensils for each student

Instructions

- Distribute SEE Learning journals to students and make sure everyone has a writing utensil.
- Invite students to participate in mindful writing.
- Facilitate mindful writing, using the alphabet as the subject.
- Discuss the experience.

Sample script

- *"Now we are going to mindful with something that is a little more challenging to pay attention to: handwriting."*

- *Notice how you are sitting: are you in a comfortable posture for a short writing practice?*
- *Let's take one breath to settle into a comfortable posture for mindful writing.*
- *Slowly pick up the pencil. Notice how you are holding it, where do you feel the pencil in your hand, against your fingers? Can you notice anything else with any other of your senses?*
- *Slowly put the pencil to paper, but don't move from there. [Pause.]*
- *In a moment, you are going to write the lowercase alphabet. But not yet.*
- *As you write, notice how the pencil feels as it presses down against the paper; notice the movement of your hand remember to keep breathing, if your attention wanders, notice it wandering and then bring it back.*
- *When you finish, slowly put your pencil down, then take three breaths.*
- *Debrief: What zone do you feel in right now?*
- *What sensations do you notice in your body? Has your breathing changed?*
- *Was it hard to pay attention to all 26 letters? What does your handwriting look like, is it different?*
- *What other activities could we do together mindfully?"*

DEBRIEF

There is no debrief listed here because each Reflective Practice contains discussion questions specific to each practice.

OPTIONAL REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Mindful Eating*

12 minutes

Overview

In this activity, your students will engage in a mindful eating exercise, which involves examining and then very slowly eating a piece of food with full attention.

Materials Required

- Small food or snack items such as grapes, raisins, grape tomatoes, or crackers with enough for two items per student
- Napkins

Instructions

- Put food items on a plate that can be passed. Let students know that they will be eating the item eventually.
- Tell students to take one item and a napkin and pass it on. Be sure not to eat it yet.
- Remind students of “I Notice, I Wonder.” Tell them this activity is similar. Let them know they are going to pay close attention with all their senses to the food item. This will be a slow process. [Use the script below if needed.]
- After you conclude (such as when the timer or chime goes off), have the students remain

in a circle standing and debrief with the questions below.

Teaching Tips

- Be mindful of student allergies or other special circumstances with your group.

Sample script

- *“We’re going to do a mindful eating activity now. That means we’re going to eat by paying attention very closely. Let’s see what that means.*
- *I have some snacks here and some napkins. I’m going to take one snack and one napkin pass it on. Each of you can take one and then pass it on to the next person until we all have one. Don’t eat yours just yet - just put it on the napkin.*
- *Earlier we did an activity called “I Notice, I Wonder.” We all looked at an [the object you used for that activity] together. We paid close attention to it and noticed all sorts of things.*
- *We’re going to do something similar with this snack. Let’s pay close attention to it with all our senses and see what we notice. We can look at it, smell it, feel it in our hands or against our lips, even listen to it. And soon we’re going to taste it, but not just yet. Then we’ll share at the end of the activity.*
- *What are some things you notice about your snack just by looking at it? (for example, its color, how it reflects the light, its surface) Now, Look again...what is another detail that*

you did not notice before? Now, pick it up – anything more you notice? Now smell it. Anyone notice a smell? Do you notice anything happening in your mouth while you’re looking at it? When you think about eating it, do you notice any thoughts? Your mind might be telling you “oh boy, I can’t wait!” or “Yuck, I don’t want to eat that!” or you might feel a little curious, or just neutral.

- Now we’re going to eat it, but we’re going to do it mindfully. That means we’ll pay close attention. We’re not going to eat it all at once.
- Take your snack and put it in your mouth but don’t bite on it yet. Just feel what it’s like inside your mouth.
- Now let’s take a first bite - just one bite. Pay close attention and see what you notice.
- Now let’s take a few more bites, but very slowly. You don’t need to speak just yet: what are you noticing? Is the taste staying the same or changing? Can you notice any thoughts?
- Let’s take a moment to slowly eat our snack mindfully, keeping our attention focused on our eating. At the same time we’re using awareness to see what we notice. Let’s do this in silence and raise your hand when you are finished eating. [Wait until most of your students have finished eating, then ring the chime.]
- Now let’s share what we noticed. What did you notice?

- Next ask:
 - What do you notice on the inside? [Ask specifically about sensations and where they are in the body, reinforcing learning from Chapter 2]
 - What zone do you feel in right now?
 - Did any of you notice any acts of kindness when we were doing mindful eating or passing out the snacks?
 - We each received the snack from someone else, and they received it from someone else, didn’t they? How many acts of kindness can you count from receiving your snack?
 - Do you think you could do mindful eating with other foods or at other times? If you like you can even do mindful eating at home or at lunchtime in school.
 - What other activities could we do together mindfully?” [Invite sharing.]

If you have time, repeat the activity with the same snack or with a different snack. Then conclude by pointing out that we can eat anything with mindfulness and attention.

OPTIONAL REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Mindful Walking*

12 minutes

Overview

- This activity involves having students walk slowly in a line, one in front of the other, while

paying attention to the simple act of walking and the sensations of one's feet on the ground.

- Mindful walking is different from mindful eating in that the activity itself can be less stimulating and even boring. It's important to cultivate attention using neutral or "boring" things, because we naturally pay attention to fun and stimulating things, whereas it is the things that we find less stimulating that we have difficulty paying close attention to.

Materials Required

- A clear open space where your class can walk in a circle together

Instructions

- Clear an open space where your class can walk in a circle. Make sure there are no obstacles that students can trip on or bump into.
- Get your students into a circle. Set the distance between students (two to three feet between each student).
- Have students turn to face the same direction. Decide on a number of rounds (two to three) you will mindfully walk, or set a timer (3-5 min).
- Lead the slow walk yourself the first time, then have a student lead.
- Set the pace (one step per in-breath and out-breath may work well).
- Ask students to lower their gaze so they only see the feet of the student in front of them.

- After you conclude (such as when the timer or chime goes off), have the students remain in a circle standing and debrief with the questions below.

Teaching Tips

- You may need to use an outdoor space, hall, or gym.
- As an alternative to leading the activity yourself, you may start with a few students and then allow students to join the line or circle as they feel ready. In this case, you would join last, first making sure that each student understands what to do and feels comfortable engaging in the mindful walking.
- You are recommended to do this activity more than once. As your students gain familiarity, you can start and conclude the activity in mindful silence also. For example, you can each rise from your seats slowly and with full attention one by one as you join the line, and when the mindful walking concludes, you can slowly take your seats, again in silence, one by one, until the last person is seated. You can also start having students volunteer to be the "leader"—the person who starts and ends the activity and sets the pace.

Sample script

- *"Now we're going to be mindful with something that's a little harder to pay attention to.*
- *We walk all the time, so it's hard to pay attention to it. It's easier to pay attention when something is new or exciting or fun, isn't it?*

- *Let's all get in a circle and hold our arms out to make sure we have enough space in between us. Now take 2 large steps back.*
- *We're going to walk in a circle. I will lead you in a slow walk. I might pace my walking by taking one step with my in-breath and one step with my out-breath. You can do this if you like. It's not required.*
- *You'll wait until the person in front of you moves away from you to begin. Once we are all mindfully walking, we will go for a couple rounds.*
- *Keep your eyes down on the feet of the person in front of you. See if you can keep the same distance as you walk—not too close to them and not too far away.*
- *Now I'm going to start and we're going to do the whole thing in silence, without talking.*
 - *When your walking is completed, ask:*
 - *What do you notice on the inside? [Ask specifically about sensations and where they are in the body, reinforcing learning from Chapter 2]*
 - *What zone do you feel in right now?*
 - *What else do you notice from doing mindful walking?*
 - *What other activities could we do together mindfully?"*





Cultivating Attention on an Object

PURPOSE

This learning experience introduces the idea of focused attention training, using the breath or some other neutral object (such as a neutral sensation) as the object of focus. This may be more challenging than previous activities, which involved paying attention to things that are more stimulating. True attention training, however, involves learning how to pay attention even when something is not that

stimulating, because we already naturally pay attention to things that we find interesting. The example of training a puppy or elephant is first introduced to explain the basic components of focused attention training, followed by a reflective exercise involving focus on a single neutral object, such as the breath, and then a drawing exercise to reinforce learning.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Reinforce their understanding of mindfulness and awareness through metaphors as well as direct experience.
- Experience the process for cultivating focused attention on a single object.
- Draw their own images to illustrate attention training.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Attention & Self-Awareness

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Drawing paper and pens, pencils, or markers for drawing
- Print-outs of the images at the end of this learning experience

LENGTH

35 minutes

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“What are some experiences we have had together that helped us to strengthen our attention muscle?”*
- *Did anyone notice a time when a spark could have become a forest fire, but you noticed and stopped it in time? It could be something small.*
- *Let’s practice our attention a bit with a resource. To help us concentrate, we’re going to keep our eyes on the ground or close them.*
- *Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let’s just bring our resource to mind. And let’s see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we’re going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Whenever you notice that you got distracted and you forgot about your resource, you can*

bring your mind back to your resource.
[Pause for a longer time, such as 15-30 seconds or longer.]

- *What did you notice on the inside?”*

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 8 minutes

Cultivating Focused Attention

Overview

- The purpose of this presentation and discussion is to introduce the idea that we can learn to focus our attention on a single object and sustain that attention over time. The method we use is simply to hold a neutral object of focus (such as the breath) in mind and bring our mind back to it whenever we notice that our mind has wandered or has become sleepy (lethargic or dull).
- This presentation uses a metaphor of training a puppy to reinforce the concepts of mindfulness and awareness:
 - Mindfulness = being able to keep one’s mind on a chosen object without forgetting it
 - Awareness = noticing what is taking place in the mind (such as when it gets distracted or sleepy)
 - The puppy = the mind
 - The path = the object of focus (what we’re paying attention to)
 - The leash = mindfulness (what we use to keep our object of focus in mind)

- The compassionate owner = awareness (what we use to notice if the mind has wandered or is sleepy)
- This not only can help to bring about greater calm and well-being in our bodies and minds, but it also builds our attention like a muscle. With increased attention, we can learn better, we can focus and pay attention better, we can redirect our attention easily when necessary, and we also have a tool for examining our own minds and mental processes, including thoughts and emotions.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We can keep our attention on a single object for longer periods of time.
- Our mind may wander or it may get a bit sleepy.
- If we lose track of our object, we can simply return our attention to the object and hold it again gently in our mind.
- When we keep bringing our mind back and holding our object, our attention gets stronger over time.
- We can feel calmer when we practice sustaining our attention.
- We can learn more easily when we strengthen our attention.
- We can see our attention strengthen gradually through practice.
- We can learn to pay attention even to a neutral or seemingly uninteresting object.

- Our body posture can help us to pay attention.
- Attention involves using mindfulness and awareness to keep us on task.

Materials Required

- The picture of the puppy, provided at the end of this learning experience (Alternatively, a picture of training an elephant is also provided.)

Instructions

- Show your students the picture of the puppy, provided at the end of this learning experience. (Alternatively, a picture of training an elephant is also provided.)
- Explain that the picture of the puppy is a visual metaphor for attention training. In the picture of the puppy, the path is the object of focus and the puppy is being trained to stay on the path, just as we might train our attention to remain focused on an object or activity. The puppy is the mind, which is what we are training. The leash is mindfulness, since it keeps the puppy on the path. The kind owner is awareness, since it pays attention to what the puppy is doing. (In the picture of the elephant, the elephant is the mind; the stake in the ground is the object of focus; the rope is mindfulness; and the attentive trainer is awareness.)
- In this way you can use the picture(s) to explain the concepts and practices you have been using to help students cultivate stronger attention. Discussing the importance

of compassion also helps, because attention training takes time and patience. This will also support the topic of self-compassion, which comes later in the SEE Learning curriculum.

Teaching Tips

- You have already introduced attention with the metaphor of the flashlight.

Sample script

- *What do you think is happening here?*
- *How do you train a puppy? Do you see anything in this picture that's being used to train the puppy?*
- *What is the puppy being trained to do?* (Stay on the path. Walk along the path. Not run away.)
- *What is the leash for?* (Keeping the puppy on the path. Not letting it run away. Keeping it safe.)
- *Do you think the compassionate owner has to watch the puppy? Why?* (It might stray off the path. It could get into danger.)
- *What should the owner do if the puppy wanders off the path?*
- *If the puppy is too excited, will it be hard to train? What if the puppy is very sleepy?*
- *Is training a puppy similar to when we train our attention? How might it be similar?* (It takes time and practice. We keep our mind on one thing, like the trainer keeping the puppy on the path. We are training our mind.)

- *If we're trying to pay attention to something, like the puppy on the path, and our mind wanders off, what could we do? Could we bring our mind back like the kind owner brings the puppy back?*
- *Is it important for the owner to be kind and patient when training the puppy? Why?* (It takes time. The puppy could get discouraged.)
- *If the compassionate owner keeps walking the puppy and keeping it on the path every day, what do you think will happen eventually?* (It will get used to it. It will get trained. It may be able to walk without a leash one day.)

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 8 minutes

Focused Attention on the Breath*

Overview

This reflective practices introduces the more formal practice of attention training on a single object, such as the breath. The key is to sustain attention and bring the mind back when it wanders (or keep attention crisp if one becomes sleepy). The simple method is bringing the mind back whenever it wanders.

Materials Required

None

Instructions

- Begin with a grounding or resourcing practice first to bring about greater calm in the body.
- Ask students to pick a part of the body where they can notice their breathing (nose, chest, belly).
- Ask students to pick some other neutral object if they prefer (a spot on the ground, a part of the body that feels neutral, a neutral sensation). The object should be neutral and not very stimulating.
- Remind them that when their attention wanders, they can bring it back to their object (the breath or other object of focus)
- Remind students that if they become uncomfortable focusing on one thing, they can always return to doing grounding or resourcing or can stop the practice entirely. (Use the script below to facilitate the practice.

Teaching Tips

- It is very important to remind students that they can always return to doing grounding or resourcing or can stop the practice entirely, especially those who experience dysregulation when trying to sit still or focus, for whom it may take more time before they can do practices like this with ease.
- This third chapter of SEE Learning provides a range of attention training practices, but this particular reflective practice of focusing attention on the breath can become a foundational practice for your class. You

are encouraged to repeat this practice throughout the school year.

- Feel free to record yourself or a student guiding the practice so that you can play the recording back. Be aware that it may take many sessions until your students gain some familiarity with it.

Sample script

- *“Now let’s try to train our attention in the way we’d train a puppy.*
- *Let’s take a comfortable seat and we will use what we just learned.*
- *Just like the puppy, if we’re too excited or too sleepy, or if we’re not in our resilient zone, it will be hard to train our attention.*
- *So first we’ll do a resourcing and grounding activity to help us be in our resilient zone.*
- *Let’s think of one of our resources in silence. Or if you prefer, you can do some grounding where you are sitting. [Pause.]*
- *As we think of our resources, let’s notice any pleasant or neutral sensations in the body. [Pause.]*
- *If you find a pleasant or neutral sensation, just keep your focus on that. That can be your object of focus for now. [Pause.]*
- *Maybe now our bodies are feeling more relaxed. Let’s focus on our breath now. We’ll use that as our object of focus. If you don’t want to use your breath, you can choose a neutral sensation.*

- *It can help to close your eyes. If you don't want to close them, then lower your eyes to the floor. Let's be careful not to distract anyone else, because we're all trying to pay attention.*
- *Bring your attention to your breath as it enters and leaves your body and just allow your attention to remain with the breath.*
- *You may notice the breath in your nose. If so, you can pay attention there.*
- *You may notice the breath in the rise and fall of your belly. If so, you can pay attention there.*
- *You may notice the breath somewhere else. Then you can pay attention there.*
- *Wherever you choose, we'll just keep our attention there on the breath. [Pause.]*
- *Let's just breathe in a very natural and relaxed way, and keep our attention with the breath.*
- *We should be relaxed when doing this, but if instead you feel uncomfortable, you can stop paying attention to the breath and instead go back to doing resourcing or grounding. Or if you need to, just stop and relax on your own quietly.*
- *Otherwise let's keep our attention on the breath. [Pause.]*
- *If we get distracted or our mind wanders, we just bring our mind back to the breath, just like bringing the puppy back. And we see if we can hold the breath in our mind a little longer. [Longer pause.]*

- *Now we can open our eyes. What was that like? Who would like to share?*
- *Were you able to keep your attention on the breath with mindfulness?*
- *Were you able to use awareness to notice when you were focused or when you were not focused?*
- *What sensations do you notice in your body now?*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 12 minutes

Drawing Attention Training

Overview

In this activity you will ask students to make a drawing that shows one thing they have learned about attention. You may decide to allow them to choose freely or you may wish to specify more clearly what you'd like them to draw about. The drawings will help them to bring home their understanding and share with you and their classmates what they have come to understand about attention and how to strengthen it.

Materials Required

- Blank paper for drawing
- Markers, crayons, or pens

Instructions

- Together, make a list of the things they have learned about attention.
- Have them each choose something from the list to draw. If some students struggle to find something to draw, you can ask them to draw an activity you did as a class (such as mindful walking or mindful eating). Or you can ask them to draw any activity they like to do, since any activity can be done with mindfulness and awareness.
- Allow several minutes for drawing and then allow students to share and explain their drawings. As they share, be sure to ask how attention plays a role in the drawing, asking about how mindfulness, heedfulness or awareness might be present in their drawings.

Teaching Tips

- You can also ask them to write a word on their drawing that explains what it is trying to depict (e.g. "mindfulness," "a cloudy mind," etc.) or the activity they are depicting ("mindful walking," "playing games," etc.).
- After your students have shared, you may wish to hang up their drawings around the classroom as reminders and reinforcement of what the class has learned about attention.

Sample script

- *"We've learned a lot of things about attention and how to strengthen it."*

- *What if we wanted to share what we've learned with other students in the school or with our family?*
- *Let's come up with a list of a few things we've learned and then we'll draw pictures that we could use to share what we've learned with others.*
- *Who can name one thing we've learned about attention? (For example: It can be trained. It is like a flashlight. It is like training a puppy. It helps us learn and notice things. We can do it with any activity. It helps us have a clear and not cloudy mind like in the mind jar. It involves mindfulness, awareness and heedfulness, etc.) (You may wish to come up with a list that you write on the board or a piece of chart paper.)*
- *Who can name one way we strengthen our attention? (For example: By practicing. By exercising it. By bringing our mind back when it wanders. By not falling asleep. By having good posture. You may wish to make a separate list of these.)*
- *Who can describe our mind when we're not able to pay attention? How might it be?*
- *Do you think we could make some drawings to share what we've learned?*
- *Let's each making a drawing that shows one thing we've learned about attention."*

You can also give them more direct guidance about what to draw while still allowing for their individual creativity, such as:

- Let's each take a piece of paper and draw three images.
- First we'll draw what it looks like when our mind is sleepy, cloudy or dull, or we are in our "low zone." You can draw yourself or an animal or something else that shows that the mind doesn't have much clarity.
- The second image will be when our mind is wandering because we're stuck in our high zone. Maybe we're too excited or uncomfortable. Here our mind is full of distractions. What does that look like?
- And the third image will be when our mind is balanced and we are in our resilient (or OK) zone. Here our mind is in a calm, alert state. It's not too distracted and it's not too dull and sleepy. This kind of mind can pay attention and learn anything.

After students have had time to draw, invite students to share their work.

Ask:

- "How does attention play a role in your drawing?"
- How is mindfulness, heedfulness, or awareness in your drawings?"

DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- "Have you learned anything about attention that you think you could use?"
- Have you noticed any change in your ability to pay attention?"

- Do you think your attention would grow stronger if we practiced more? Would that be helpful?"

Expanding on the practice of focused attention on the breath

As you practice focused attention on the breath more with your students, you can also introduce the idea of mentally counting the breath. This involves counting "1" in one's mind on the in-breath, and then "2" on the out-breath until one gets to 10. After that, one can start over at 1 again. This can be a vivid way of illustrating how quickly we can get distracted, whereupon we tend to lose count of where we were. Counting the breath is a very concrete way to help students reach the critical insight that attention can be strengthened through practice, because students can tangibly see for themselves that their ability to count without losing track of where they are increases over time.

As you continue the practice, you can also begin to show your students that body posture can help facilitate a calm, alert mind. In subsequent practices, you can encourage them to sit in a way that they find comfortable but alert.

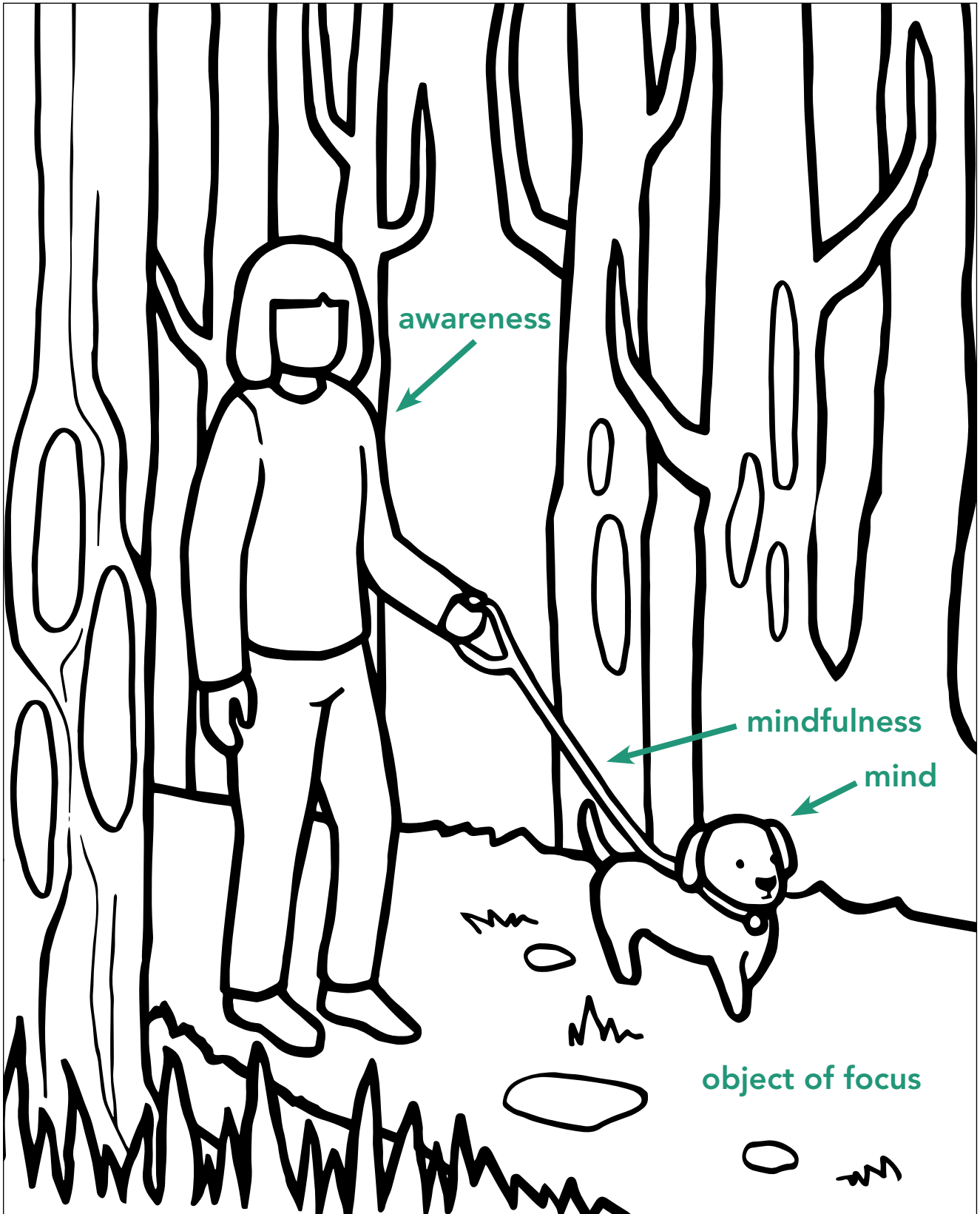
- "Did you know that the way we sit can affect our mind? If we sit like this [slumping], we can actually make our minds more dull and sleepy. If we stood up with our eyes wide open, how do you think our minds would be? Dull and sleepy or more easily distracted?"

- *So instead, next time when we do our attention training on the breath, we're going to find a comfortable posture helps us be stable and clear, helps us be in that calm, alert state. I'm going to sit right now in that way. [Sit so that your spine is relatively upright and straight, and your feet are planted on the ground firmly.]*
- *I like to imagine sometimes that I am a mountain, sitting very stable and unable to be distracted.*
- *Sometimes to help me sit up straight, I imagine that I'm a puppet with a string pulling me gently from the top of my head straight up.*
- *And I like to keep my eyes on the ground, so I'm not distracted. Sometimes, I like to close my eyes entirely. You can do that too if it helps you to not get distracted.*
- *Shall we try sitting like that?"*

Attention Training



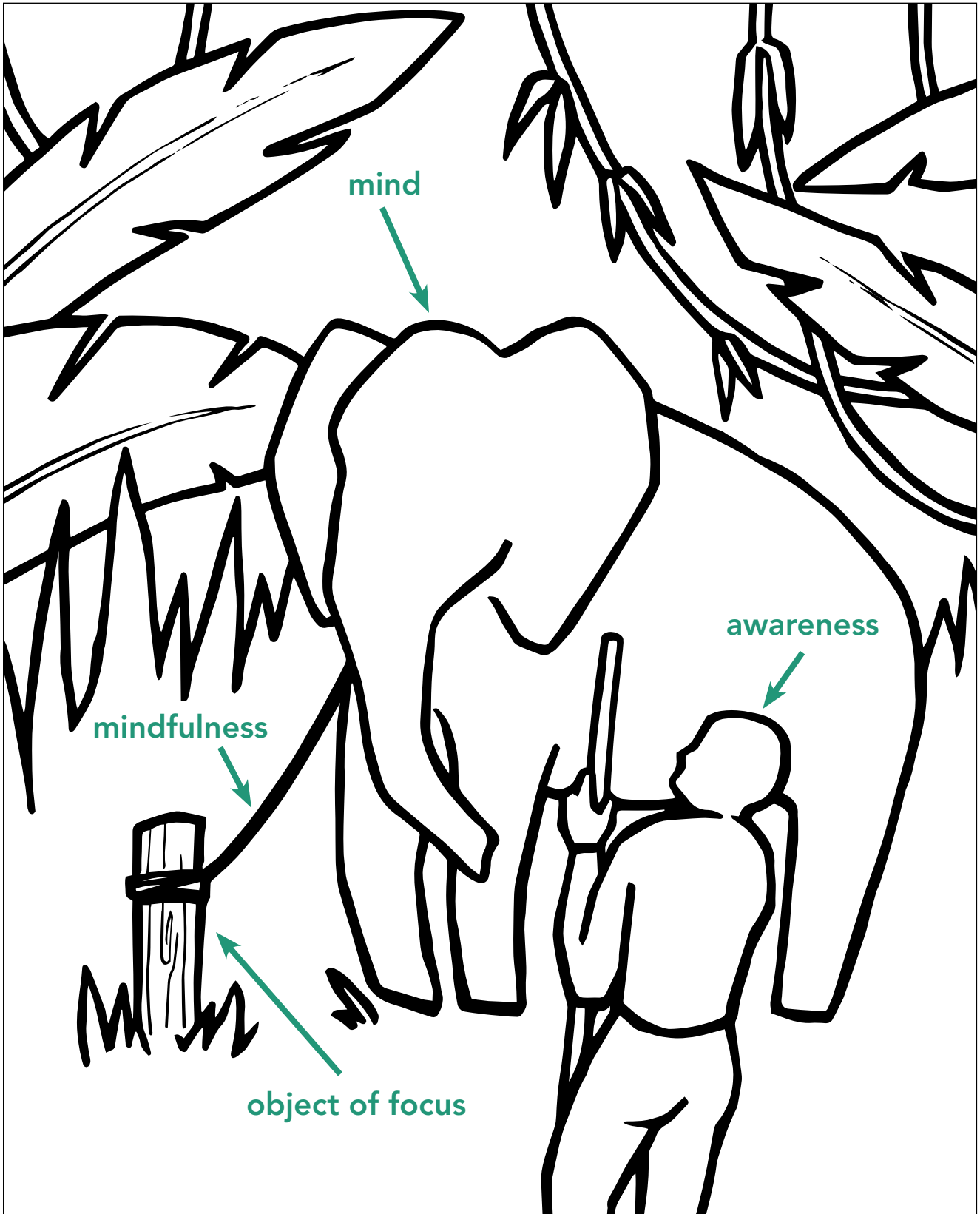
Attention Training



Attention Training



Attention Training



Self-Awareness

PURPOSE

Students have already learned to direct their attention inwards to the body and sensations. In this learning experience they will explore directing attention inwardly to the mind (called “metacognition”), meaning thoughts,

emotions, and feelings. They will explore how such attention can eventually help them to create a “gap” between stimulus and response, a great aid for stopping the spark before it becomes a forest fire.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Learn the practice of observing their own thoughts and feelings.
- Notice a gap between stimulus and response, facilitating impulse control.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



**Attention &
Self-Awareness**

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- The mind jar
- A print-out of the sky image at the end of this learning experience

LENGTH

25 minutes

CHECK-IN | 5 minutes

- *“Let’s prepare for a short attention practice on the breath. How do we want our body to be?”*
- *First we’ll take a comfortable and upright posture. Then we’ll keep our eyes on the ground or close them.*
- *Before we strengthen our attention, we’ll do some resourcing or grounding to calm our bodies. Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let’s just bring our resource to mind. And let’s see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we’re going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s become aware of our breathing. Let’s see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back*

to your resource or grounding, or just take a small break, making sure not to disturb anyone else. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]

- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *What did you notice?”*

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 7 minutes

Can We Watch the Mind?

Overview

The purpose of this discussion is to introduce the idea of paying attention to our minds without immediately getting caught up in thoughts, feelings, memories, and so on. The image of the blue sky with a few clouds and birds is a metaphor for the mind.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We can place our attention on our mind itself.
- We can notice thoughts, feelings, sensations, memories, and images as they come and go.
- We can pay attention to our thoughts and emotions in our mind.
- When we watch simply observe our thoughts, we get less caught up in them.
- Watching our thoughts helps us learn about what’s going on inside us and helps us be less reactive.

Materials Required

- The mind jar
- Copies of the image of the sky with clouds and birds (at end of this learning experience)

Instructions

- Review what we can pay attention to inside and outside.
- Show students the mind jar again. Recollect together what you did together in building the mind jar.
- Ask students about how many thoughts they may have in one day. Try to count them using an example. They might notice images, thoughts, feelings, sensations.
- Allow time for sharing.
- Let them know you are going to talk them through a reflective practice to try to watch their own thoughts.

Teaching Tips

- Remind students that we are “just noticing” like we did with the object in “I Notice, I Wonder.”
- There are no right answers. A distraction is just something to notice.

Sample script

- *“We’ve been learning how to strengthen our attention.*
- *We’ve learned we can pay attention to things on the outside and things on the inside.*

- *What are things we could pay attention to on the inside? What goes on inside us?*
- *Where are our thoughts? When I have an idea or think of something, is that on the outside or inside?*
- *What about when I feel something? Like when I feel happy or tired? Or when I’m upset? Or when I’m happy? Where are those?*
- *Do you think we can pay attention to our thoughts and what’s going on inside us?*
- *Remember when we made the mind jar and we read the story about Theresa? Lots of things were going on and we put them in the mind jar.*
- *What did we put in? Can you remember what those things stood for?*
- *Do we have thoughts there? What about feelings? What else do we have there?*
- *All these things like our thoughts and feelings come up in our minds. How many thoughts do you have each day? Do you think you could count them?*
- *Do you think it’s possible to watch your thoughts?*
- *Usually when we have a thought we get all caught up in it. It carries us away. For example, I might think of ice cream. Let’s talk a moment to do this right now. Let’s close our eyes and think about ice cream. I will ring the chime when a minute is up.*

- [Allow a minute to pass and ring the chime and ask:] *What happened ? Then make this point. Then suddenly I am thinking of what kind of ice cream I want, and where I'm going to get it, and how good it's going to taste! Then I might be thinking about the ice cream I had at the beach and then I might be thinking I wish I could go to the beach and pretty soon I would be carried away.*
- *But what if I just watched that thought? What do you think would happen?*
- *Do our thoughts stay forever?*
- *And if I watched it, do you think a new thought would come eventually?*
- *Take a look at this picture. [Show picture of the sky with clouds.] What do you notice about this picture?*
- *What if like the clear mind jar, this picture of the sky were a picture of our mind and the thoughts and feelings that come up in it?*
- *What do you think are the thoughts and feelings? Maybe they are the clouds here. What are other things that appear in the sky? Maybe a rainbow, birds, or an airplane? Maybe even a storm or lightning bolt would appear sometimes!*
- *When all those things come up in the sky, what does the sky do? Does it change? Does it try to hold on to anything that appears? Does it try to push anything away?*
- *I wonder if we can watch our thoughts and feelings like this sky. Do you think we can*

watch thoughts come and go without holding on to them or pushing them away? We're going to try. We'll do an experiment together."

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 10 minutes

Observing the Mind

Overview

This is a reflective practice similar to the focused attention on the breath, except that instead of a single object of focus, students will be just sitting quietly with eyes closed or downcast while simply noticing what arises in their mind, without getting involved with the contents of their thoughts and feelings. The practice here is just to watch and observe them with open curiosity and without getting too involved. Unlike daydreaming, the purpose is to not get caught up in thoughts and carried away by them, but instead watch them with an open curiosity and without judgment. Practicing this can increase one's ability to catch impulses before they turn into strong emotions and behavioral reactions.

Teaching Tips

- You will notice that this practice combines resourcing and grounding, attention on the breath, and then observing the mind. Each of these practices have been built up to sequentially, so if your students are not able to do this full practice, go back and practice the shorter practices with them more.
- Once they can do this combined practice, you can consider making this your main

practice, and repeat this practice many times with your students, ideally twice or more each week. You can then gradually lengthen the pauses until they are 30 seconds to a minute in length. Eventually you may be able to do 5-minute long practices. As your students eventually become able to do this, they will be engaging in very significant attention training, and their progress will be an encouraging sign to them that they are strengthening their muscle of attention.

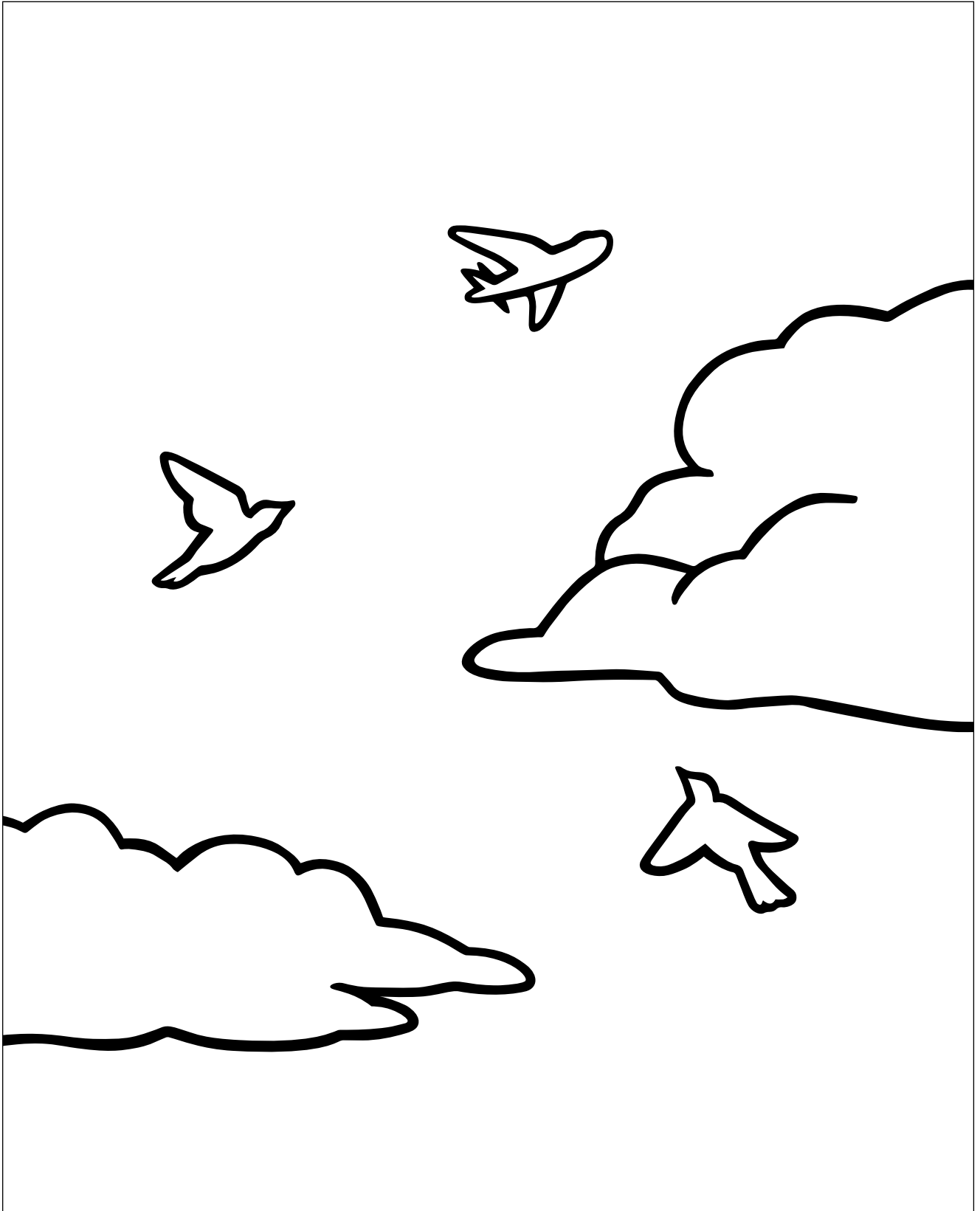
Sample script

- *"Let's take a comfortable, alert posture.*
- *If we're too excited or too tired, or if we're not in our resilient zone, it will be hard to train our attention. Just like in our drawings where we drew our minds when they were too dull or too excited.*
- *So let's sit upright with our backs straight. And so we don't get distracted, let's lower our eyes to the ground or close them.*
- *So first we'll do a resourcing and grounding activity to help us be in our resilient zone.*
- *Let's think of one of our resources in silence. Or if you prefer, you can do some grounding where you are sitting. [Pause.]*
- *Let's focus on our breath now. We'll use that as our object of focus. Remember if you start to feel uncomfortable, you can go back to your resource or to grounding. [Pause for 30 seconds or longer if your students are comfortable doing so.]*

- *Now let's practice just watching our mind.*
- *We're going to release our breath. Instead of focusing on our breath, we're just going to watch to see whatever comes up in our mind.*
- *But instead of getting caught up in our thoughts, we're going to see if we can just watch them.*
- *Let's be silent and pay close attention and see if we can do that. [Pause for 15-30 seconds, or more if your students are comfortable doing so.]*
- *If we get distracted or caught up in our thoughts, let's just remember that we're watching our thoughts. We're seeing them come, stay, and go. Let's try to do that just a little bit more. [Pause for 15-30 seconds or more.]*
- *Now let's open our eyes and share.*
- *What did you notice?*
- *Could anyone watch thoughts coming and going? What was that like?*
- *Did anyone notice a time when there were no thoughts? Maybe a pause or a break or gap between?"*

DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- *"What have you learned about the mind that you find most interesting or most helpful?*
- *How might it help us if we learned to watch our minds?*
- *Do you think you could spend a moment watching your own mind sometime in the next few days and share what you notice?"*



MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 4

Navigating Emotions

Overview

Adolescence and Emotions

In *Building Resilience from the Inside Out*, Linda Lantieri writes of adolescents: “If there is one word that characterizes adolescence, it would be ‘change.’ Adolescents are changing quickly—emotionally, physically, intellectually, socially, and spiritually. Central to this metamorphosis is the young person’s sense of his emerging self as an adult, not a child.”

She goes on to write, “Adolescents have many sources of stress in their lives. At the same time that their bodies are changing in bewildering ways, they are feeling self-conscious about the judgment of others—especially of their peers, who may not always be so kind. Furthermore, they are measuring themselves against yardsticks provided by a culture with often unrealistic ideals about appearance and achievement. Added to this is the confusing pressure of conformity, which often involves risky behaviors that may be associated with adulthood, but for which they may not yet fully understand the consequences.”

All this means that adolescence is an ideal time to explore the inner world of emotions and the mind with students: both in terms of the students’ developmental abilities and in terms of the usefulness and direct application of such material and skills to their everyday lives and their ability to manage stress, expectations, and relationships.

What is an Emotion?

Paul Ekman, Ph.D., one of the leading researchers on emotions, writes in his book *Emotions Revealed*, “Emotion is a process, a particular kind of automatic appraisal influenced by our evolutionary and personal past, in which we sense that something important to our welfare is occurring, and a set of physiological changes and emotional behaviors begins to deal with the situation.” Emotions are things we feel, but they also involve physical systems in the body and brain. Unlike unemotional thoughts, in emotion there is a sense of investment: we, or our bodies, care about something. If we think about something we don’t care about at all, or have no investment in, we’re unlikely to get emotional about it. The more we care about something, the stronger our emotional response tends to be.

This chapter therefore focuses on what can be called “emotional hygiene.” First of all, this means developing a basic literacy about emotions, such as being able to identify and name them, as well as their characteristics. On a deeper level, it means cultivating practices of emotional discernment and emotion regulation for the benefit of both oneself and others.

The first learning experience, “Exploring Emotions,” introduces the idea of what an emotion is by inviting students to differentiate it from thoughts and sensations. While both sensations and

emotions can be considered “feelings,” sensations are physical and tend to be experienced directly in the body, and often in just one part of the body. Emotions, on the other hand, are not localizable in a specific part of the body, and are mental and not just physical. For example, we can feel pain in our left hand and not our right hand, but we can’t feel anger in one hand and not the other. When we feel an emotion like anger, we feel it in ourselves as a whole. In a similar way, students will explore differences and similarities across thoughts, sensations, and emotions.

Throughout this chapter, emotions will be explored in two ways: first by thinking about and discussing emotions from the outside (taking a third-person approach) and second by watching their emotions and states of mind directly (taking a first-person approach). For the latter, they will use the attention skills developed in Chapter 3, particularly the final skill of watching and becoming aware of what arises in the mind (called meta-cognition or meta-awareness).

In the second learning experience, “Emotion Families,” students start with a few common emotions and then build out “families” of emotions by adding more emotion terms that are related to the starting term. By doing so, they learn which emotions are related to each other and start to develop a richer vocabulary of emotion terms. Psychologists also use the idea of “emotion families” to discuss how emotions are related to each other, and students can then compare the emotion families charts they create to those created by scientists.

How Do Emotions Work?

Emotions are triggered by stimuli (external or internal) and then have effects on our bodies and minds. In the third learning experience, “Sparks of Emotion,” a story is used to illustrate moments when a trigger can elicit an emotional reaction and how these emotions can build up over time. Students listen to the story and snap their fingers when they notice something that could spark an emotion (connecting back to the idea of the spark and the forest fire from Chapter 3). They then stand on a map of the three zones on the floor to indicate where the character in the story might be and share what emotion the character might be feeling and what strategy could be used at that moment.

Emotions often arise because of our needs being met or going unmet. Learning experience four examines commonly shared needs (such as safety, friendship, respect, and freedom) and asks students to explore what emotions might arise when these needs are met or go unmet. Exploring the relationship between needs and emotions can be incredibly powerful, because it can help students understand where emotions come from. This can lead to a more understanding and accepting attitude towards their own emotions and those of others.

Understanding the process by which emotions work also helps us navigate them. Therefore, the fifth and sixth learning experiences introduce the idea of the “emotion timeline.” The timeline of emotions starts with a stimulus, because emotions always occur in response to stimuli, external or internal. These stimuli always occur in a context within which they are evaluated, called an “appraisal.” Appraisals are typically judgments of something as positive or negative, and they are often so fast that we are not consciously aware of them. Appraisals of things as positive or negative then give rise to emotions, which can in turn create impulses for behavior. If the emotion happens to us and we have little awareness of what is happening, we may act in ways that cause unintended problems, whereas if we have more awareness, then we may be able to create a “gap” between the stimulus and response, and act more appropriately. These are the components of the emotion timeline that students will explore.

Looking at our body yields important information regarding our emotional state. Exploring the “activation/feeling tone” chart is one way of doing this. The chart contains an axis of feeling (from unpleasant to pleasant) and an axis of activation (from deactivated to highly activated). Activation refers to the level of energy one feels (lethargic or low in energy as opposed to highly excited or agitated). In the seventh learning experience, “Mapping Emotions,” students will draw emotions on the core affect chart, thereby learning also that a single emotion can exist along a range of bodily feelings. The core affect chart can also help in exploring the concept of “oppositional emotions,” namely how certain emotional states are less compatible with others.

While all emotions are natural, some emotions can become risky if they get out of control, because they can lead to very strong impulses to behavior that could be destructive. It is important for students to decide for themselves which emotions may be risky for them. They will do so by asking questions and investigating the emotion closely: what impulses does it lead to? What would society or our school look like if people had more of this emotion? What if they had less of it? Students will then examine what strategies they have for dealing with those emotions they have identified as potentially risky. They will examine how some strategies can help with a variety of risky emotions, while other strategies are specific to certain emotions. This concept of “Navigating Emotions” is the topic for the eighth and final learning experience.

In discussing risky emotions, it is important to stress that everyone has these emotions, and that having an emotion, even if one identifies it as potentially risky, does not mean that there is anything wrong with oneself. Furthermore, the point of emotional awareness is to navigate emotions skilfully without suppressing emotions unduly but also without expressing them in unhelpful ways that harm oneself or others.

When students recognize how risky emotions can become destructive if left unattended, they will understand the value of cultivating good “emotional hygiene.” This does not mean suppressing uncomfortable emotions. Rather, it means developing a healthy way of dealing with one’s emotions. This requires a basic literacy about emotions, such as being able to identify and name them, as well as their characteristics, and being able to differentiate emotions from other types of feelings, like physical sensations. It also means exploring the relationship between emotions and needs. This is because emotions—especially negative emotions—often arise from unmet needs. Seeing this clearly can help students to be more patient with themselves and others. The first three learning experiences therefore explore the idea of needs and what feelings (sensations and emotions) arise when a need is met or goes unmet.

This leads to the final concept of the chapter, the idea of an “ethics of restraint.” This means restraint from doing things that harm ourselves or others. The idea that because we want kindness, compassion, and consideration from others, and don’t want them to harm us, we ourselves should refrain from harming others. Since strong emotions, especially risky ones, can influence our behaviors, learning to navigate them helps us practice this “ethics of restraint,” which is precisely what we want others to practice towards us as well. Importantly, an ethics of restraint is not something imposed upon students by others or from the outside: it comes from their own judgment of what is beneficial to themselves and others.

Student Personal Practice

The reflective practices in this chapter are important for integrating students’ conceptual understanding of emotions with their own personal experience and ability to recognize emotions in themselves. The final two reflective practices focus especially on connecting “third-person” knowledge of emotions with their own meta-awareness (noticing thoughts and emotions) and interoception (attending to sensations and the internal state of the body). Repeat these last two reflective practices especially when you have time.

Teacher Personal Practice

It is recommended that you engage in the final two reflective practices yourself before leading your students in them.

Although we tend to take our understanding of emotions for granted, it can be surprising how much our ideas vary from person to person. While teaching this chapter, ask your friends, family members and colleagues how they would define emotion and whether they think things like hunger, pain, hope, surprise and so on are emotions, and if so why or why not. You can also pause during

moments of the day to check in with yourself and see which emotion, if any, you are feeling at that moment.

Further Reading and Resources

Building Emotional Intelligence: Practices to Cultivate Inner Resilience in Children by Linda Lantieri.
Introduction by Daniel Goleman.

A few story books that may be of help for the material in this chapter are:

- *All the Way to Lhasa: A Tale from Tibet* by Barbara Helen Berger. Its a story of perseverance involving a boy who makes a difficult journey with his yak to the Tibetan capital.
- *The Phantom Tollbooth* by Norton Juster, illustrated by Jules Feiffer.

Parent/Caregiver Information Letter



Date: _____

Dear Parent or Caregiver,

This letter is to inform you that your child is now starting **SEE Learning, Chapter 4, "Navigating Emotions."** You may remember that SEE Learning is a K-12 educational program created by Emory University to enrich young people's social, emotional, and ethical (SEE) development.

In Chapter 4, your child will explore the topic of emotions, how they arise, and how better to "navigate" them. Your child will learn how to "map" emotions using a variety of tools (such as emotion families, an emotion timeline, and charts for how emotions are experienced in the body). They will then explore using this knowledge to better identify emotions in themselves and how they unfold, and how to cultivate "emotional hygiene."

Home Practice

As your child goes through this chapter, it will be helpful for you to ask your child about what emotions they notice in themselves and what emotions they notice in others. It can be helpful for you to also talk about your own emotions, when they arise, and how you deal with them.

Earlier chapters included

- Chapter 1 explored the concepts of kindness and happiness through helping to form class agreements.
- Chapter 2 explored the important role that our bodies, and in particular our nervous system, play in our happiness and well-being.
- Chapter 3 addressed the topic of attention, including why it is important, how to strengthen it, and how we can use it to cultivate insight into ourselves.

Further Reading and Resources

Building Emotional Intelligence: Practices to Cultivate Inner Resilience in Children by Linda Lantieri.
Introduction by Daniel Goleman.

Remember that the SEE Learning Framework, contained within the *SEE Learning Companion*, contains an explanation of the entire curriculum. You may access it on the web at: www.compassion.emory.edu.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

Teacher/Educator Signature

Teacher/Educator Printed Name: _____

Teacher/Educator Contact Info: _____



Center for
Contemplative Science and
Compassion-Based Ethics

EMORY UNIVERSITY

Exploring Emotions

PURPOSE

This learning experience allows students to explore the similarities and differences among the three categories of thoughts, sensations, and emotions. This leads to an exploration of what some of the basic characteristics of emotions might be. Since

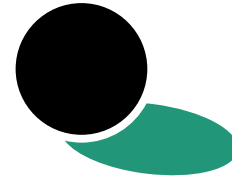
definitions of emotions vary, the purpose of this learning experience is to start students on the process of exploring emotions, not to come up with a definitive definition of emotions, thoughts, and sensations.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Differentiate emotions from thoughts and sensations.
- List some of the basic characteristics of emotions.
- Discuss the most common emotions and their variants.
- Develop a vocabulary of emotion terms.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



**Attention &
Self-Awareness**

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- The prompts provided at the end of this activity
- A bell or chime
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Markers
- A printout of the sheet at the end of this learning experience that has at the top "Sensations - Emotions - Thoughts"

LENGTH

35 minutes

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“Let’s prepare for a short attention practice. How do we want our body to be?”*
- *First we’ll take a comfortable and upright posture. Then we’ll keep our eyes on the ground or close them.*
- *Before we strengthen our attention, we’ll do some resourcing or grounding to calm our bodies. Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let’s just bring our resource to mind. And let’s see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we’re going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s become aware of our breathing. Let’s see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back*

to your resource or grounding, or just take a small break, making sure not to disturb anyone else. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]

- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *You can strengthen your attention by focusing on sensations or by focusing on the breath. It’s your choice - it’s always up to you.*
- *What did you notice?” [Share aloud.]*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 15 minutes

What are Emotions?

Overview

- In this activity, students will gather into small groups of three to answer a series of prompts intended to get them thinking about the nature of emotions.
- You will then come back together as a class to create a word map for the word “emotion.”

Content to be Explored

We can learn to distinguish emotions from thoughts and sensations, and begin to determine the characteristics of emotions as a whole and of specific emotions.

Materials Required

- The prompts provided at the end of this activity
- A bell or chime
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Markers

Instructions

- Show your students the circular graphic at the end of this learning experience that has the words “thoughts, emotions, sensations.” Ask them what they notice about it. Invite observations and questions.
- Explain that you are now going to be discussing ideas about emotions, and how they differ from thoughts and sensations.
- Tell them they are going to walk around and “mingle” with each other until they hear the chime and you say “group of 3 (or another number).” At that point, they will get into groups of that number and greet each other. Next, you will state one of the prompts below and students should spend 15 seconds thinking about the prompt & then take turns (about 20 seconds each) talking about what they think of the prompt. Repeat this process for as many of the prompts as you have time for.
- After each prompt, ask for a couple volunteers to share out something said in their group.
- Together, create a “word map” of the word “emotion,” by writing the word “emotion” in

the center of a large piece of chart paper or the whiteboard.

- First ask your students, “What words would we use to explain emotions? What words come to mind when we think of emotions?” Write their suggestions on the word map around the word “emotion.” Then ask your students, “If you were trying to explain to someone what an emotion is, what would you tell them? Could we come up with a definition of emotion?”
- Write the preliminary definition of emotion that your class comes up with on a piece of chart paper and **save both the definition and the word map for later use.**

Prompts

1. **Emotions cloud your mind or cloud your judgment. How?**
2. Emotions cause us to behave in ways that we wouldn’t if we didn’t have that emotion. How?
3. **Emotions can be powerful or weak. Describe.**
4. **Emotions and thoughts are different. How?**
5. **Emotions and sensations are different. How?**
6. Some emotions are related to each other. Which ones?
7. Emotions can help us. How?
8. Emotions can cause problems for us. How?
9. **We can develop our awareness of our emotions. How might we do that?**

Teaching Tips

- It may be helpful to project the prompts onto a screen or reveal them on the whiteboard as you go.
- If you are limited on time, try to complete the activity with the prompts that are in bold, saving the others for another time.

Sample Script

- *"Let's examine this graphic. [Hold up the graphic.] What do you notice or wonder about this graphic? Invite students to share aloud.*
- *We are going to think about and explore some ideas about emotions, thoughts and sensations and how they are related to each other.*
- *For this activity, I'm going to have you stand up and mix yourselves up – you'll walk around and "mingle" like you're talking to different people at a party. When you hear my bell, listen for me to say "group of 3" or "group of 4" or another number. At that point, you will get into a group of that number and greet each other with a hello, a high five, or a pinky hug.*
- *After you've gotten into groups, you'll hear me read a prompt. Then you'll silently think about it for 10-20 seconds. I'll ring the bell again, and then one at a time, each person in the group will share their thoughts about the prompt.*
- *You'll hear the bell ring again when it's time to put our focus back to the whole class discussion. Then we'll repeat the process, but*

you will move into a new group with different people each time. What questions do you have for me before we begin?

- *Let's begin. [Each round might take about 2 minutes. After enough time has passed for each person in each group to share, ring the chime again.]*
- *Who can share something interesting that was said in their group chat? [Ask for 1-2 volunteers to share out something that was said by someone in their group.]*
- *After the first round, check in with the group to see how the process went and what changes may need to be made. Then repeat the process above for the remaining prompts.*
- *Now let's all come back to our seats.*
- *Let's make a word map of the word "emotion." I'm going to write your thoughts down on this word map.*
- *What words would we use to explain what emotions are? What words come to mind when we think of emotions?*
- *If you were trying to explain to someone what an emotion is, what would you tell them?*
- *Let's see if we can come up with a draft of a definition of the word "emotion" for our use in our work together. "Emotions are..." [Allow your students to explore how they might define emotions. The point here is to stimulate thinking about emotions, not to arrive at a perfect or even correct definition, since the rest of the learning experiences in*

this chapter will further develop and refine their understanding of emotions.]

- *It can be quite hard to define the word “emotion.” We’re going to explore emotions much more in the coming weeks. We can learn what emotions are by coming up with lists of emotions and also by seeing the differences between emotions, sensations, and thoughts.*

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 12 minutes

Sensations, Emotions, and Thoughts

Overview

In this reflective practice, students will work in groups to come up with words they agree fall into the categories of sensations, emotions, and thoughts. Each group will then look at their lists and discuss the similarities and differences between each category. Then the entire class will share.

Content/Insights to be Explored

We can differentiate between sensations, emotions and thoughts. These are useful categories for how we talk about our inner experiences.

Materials Required

- A printout of the sheet at the end of this learning experience: “Sensations - Emotions - Thoughts”

Instructions

- Have students do this exercise in groups of three or individually. Give each group (or individual student, if they are doing it individually) a printout of the “Sensations-Emotions-Thoughts” handout.
- Instruct each group or individual to come up with a list of 5 words that they agree would fit under each column as examples of a sensation, emotion, or thought. They should only write words they agree should be there. If they don’t agree, they can put the word in the “Unsure” space below the column for later discussion.
- Once they have finished coming up with 5 words in each column, they can they try to come up with 10 words in each column by filling out an additional 5.
- Check on group progress. After most groups have put words in each of the three columns, or after you feel enough time has elapsed, ask them to move on to answering the questions at the bottom of the page.
- Give them a few minutes to discuss, look at their terms, and come up with short answers for each of these.
- Then invite each group or individual to share what they notice about what each category has in common with another and how they differ from each other. Then, focus in on emotions and ask students about the qualities particular to emotions. Write “General Qualities of Emotions” on a piece of chart paper or the whiteboard and document what

students say. If they struggle prompt them with one of the items from the chart below.

Teaching Tips

- You may find it helpful to draw a Venn diagram as students share out the commonalities and differences among the qualities of the categories of sensation, thought, and emotion.
- Document what students say about the qualities to describe emotions and save this for later.
- As your students discover aspects of the table below (General Characteristics of Emotions),

you may wish to use the language they come up with to create a similar table that will be in their own words.

Here are a some examples of general characteristics of emotions that your students may discover. Listen for them to hit upon some of these in this learning experience and the following LEs in this chapter. If and when they do, use this as an opportunity to explore that characteristic further.

Sample Script

- *"We are going to do some work categorizing sensations, emotions, and thoughts in small groups."*

General Characteristics of Emotions	
They are usually involuntary responses to a stimulus.	They involve an appraisal of the stimulus as positive or negative. (Often this appraisal is unconscious and seems automatic.)
They tend to drive behavior/compel action.	They are not neutral: they have a pleasant or unpleasant feeling tone (valence) and a level of activation in our bodies (energizing or depleting).
While we experience sensations in particular parts of the body, emotions tend to be whole body/mind experiences, not localizable in one part of the body.	They can be attended to in mind and body, because they are often accompanied by sensations in the body and changes in our mind or thinking.
They are usually triggered by things we value and care deeply about, and not by matters we care little about.	They often have signals like facial expressions or tone of voice that others can observe, especially when they become strong.

- Each group will use this worksheet to come up with a list of 5 words that are examples of that thing. So you will come up with 5 sensations, 5 emotions, and 5 thoughts. Only put words that you all agree on fit in that column. If you come up with a word but can't all agree on whether its a sensation, emotion, or thought, then that's a good thing! Put those words in the space marked "Unsure" and we'll talk about them later. What questions do you have before we proceed?
- After you have come up with 5 example words for each column, see if you can come up with 5 more for each for a total of 10 in each. [Allow them time to complete this activity.]
- Now let's all move down to the questions at the bottom of the handout. Take a few minutes to discuss the questions there and share your ideas with your group.
- Together, come up with short answers for each question. It's ok if your answers to these questions are different from other members of your group, but it's important to talk with your group about your ideas before you write them down. [Allow them a few minutes to answer the questions on the sheet.]
- Now let's come back together as a whole group. Let's have a few people from different groups share out something they noticed about what each category has in common with another and/or what is different between categories.
- Let's focus in on emotions and look at the definition we made for the word "emotion."
- If we were going to describe what qualities emotions have, what might we say? [Continue this line of questioning for as much time as you have, until you get at least three qualities listed. If you need to prompt them using the chart provided, feel free to do so.]
- This is a great list to start with. We may decide we want to add more as we continue our work with emotions."

DEBRIEF | 4 minutes

- "How might it help us if we learned to tell the difference between our emotions, thoughts and sensations?"
- What have you learned about emotions that you find most interesting or most helpful?"

Name _____

Date _____

	Sensations	Emotions	Thoughts
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

Unsure:

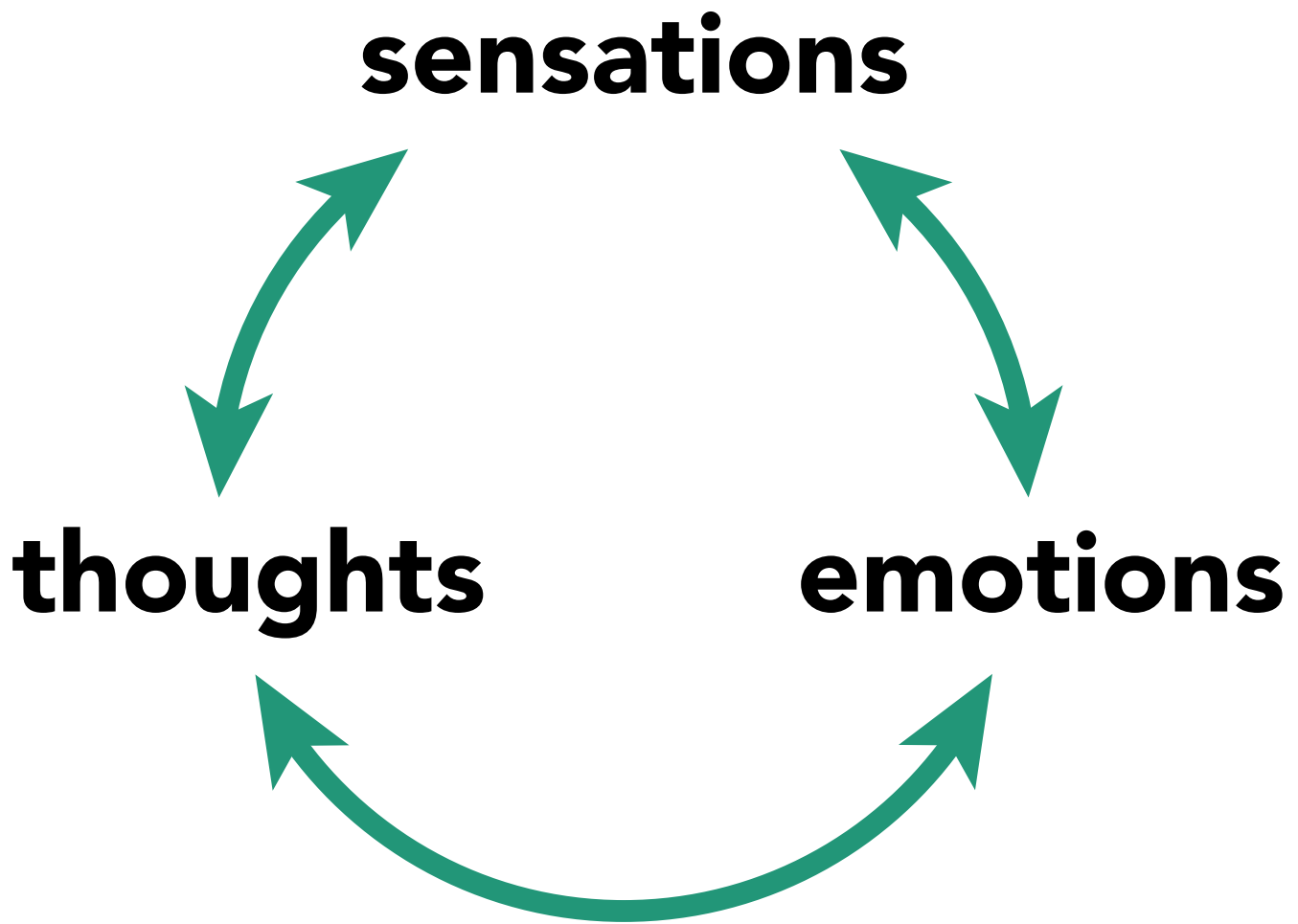
Look at the words you put in the columns above.

What do all three types of experience (sensations, emotions, and thoughts) have in common?

What makes sensations different from emotions and thoughts?

What makes emotions different from sensations and thoughts?

What makes thoughts different from emotions and sensations?



Emotion Families

PURPOSE

This learning experience enables students to explore how some emotions are related to others and how we can group them together in “emotion families.” By creating charts of “emotion families” around six common emotion terms used in SEE

Learning (happiness, sadness, compassion, fear, anger, and jealousy), students will develop their emotion vocabulary further, while seeing how emotion terms can specify how emotions vary in specific ways, such as intensity.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Discuss the most common emotions and their variants.
- Develop a vocabulary of emotion terms.
- Explore the ways different emotion terms are related to each other.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



**Attention &
Self-Awareness**

LENGTH

35 minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Whiteboard or chart paper and markers
- List of emotion words at end of this learning experience
- Large pieces of paper, enough for one per group
- Different colored markers or pens

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“Let’s prepare for a short attention practice. How do we want our body to be?”*
- *First we’ll take a comfortable and upright posture. Then we’ll keep our eyes on the ground or close them.*
- *Before we strengthen our attention, we’ll do some resourcing or grounding to calm our bodies. Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let’s just bring our resource to mind. And let’s see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we’re going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s become aware of our breathing. Let’s see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back*

to your resource or grounding, or just take a small break, making sure not to disturb anyone else. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]

- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *You can strengthen your attention by focusing on sensations or by focusing on the breath. It’s your choice - it’s always up to you.*
- *What did you notice? [Share aloud.]”*

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 4 minutes

What are Emotion Families?

Overview

This discussion presents the idea of emotion families: emotions that are all related to each other or similar in some way.

Content to be Explored

Similar emotions can be grouped together, making them easier to distinguish from other emotions.

Materials Required

- Whiteboard or chart paper and markers;
- List of emotion words at end of this learning experience
- These emotions written out in a list on the whiteboard or chart paper:
 - Happiness
 - Fear
 - Sadness

- Anger
- Compassion
- Jealousy

Instructions

- Let students know you will be talking more about emotions today. Show them the list of 6 emotion words included at the end of this learning experience, and ask someone to pick one for you to use as the example in your presentation/discussion. Ask for another word that is similar to that emotion word. As students list words, write them on the chart paper or the board. Ask students how the words' meanings are similar to each other and how they are different. Discuss the relationship between the emotion words.
- Tell students that the groups of words are an emotion family. Discuss how they are different from another emotion word and its family. As a group brainstorm some ideas for a different emotion family.
- Tell them now they are going to do an activity in which they create emotion family posters.

Teaching Tips

None

Sample Script

- *"Today we're going to talk more about emotions.*
- *Some emotions are related to each other. We use different words for them, but they are similar.*

- *For example, we have many words for fear. If I'm afraid, there are a number of ways I could express my emotion. I could say, "I'm feeling a little bit timid right now." That might mean I'm just a little bit afraid. Maybe I see a bee, and someone says, "That's a bee. Are you scared?" I might say, "I'm not scared. I'm just a little bit anxious." But maybe then I see a snake, and I say, "Oh, now I'm really scared. I'm terrified!"*
- *How is each emotion word different from another? Do they have different meanings? Are some of these emotion words for fear stronger or more intense than others?*
- *So we see that [afraid, fear, terrified, anxious, and timid] are all emotion words and they are all related, aren't they?*
- *We could say they're part of the same emotion family.*
- *They're not really part of the emotion family of happiness, are they? If someone sees a snake and is feeling afraid, would we say they're feeling happy at that moment? Probably not.*
- *What would be emotions that are part of the emotion family of happiness? Like imagine it was your birthday and you got some wonderful presents. Probably you'd be feeling the emotion of happiness. What other emotions might you be feeling? (Invite responses). So we could say those emotions are part of the emotion family of happiness.*
- *We're going to do an activity in which we create emotion families."*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 20 minutes

Making Our Own Emotion Families

Overview

In this insight activity, students will work to develop a vocabulary of emotions and explore how they relate to each other in “emotion families.”

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Similar emotions can be grouped together, making them easier to distinguish from other emotions.
- We can use many different terms for one type of emotion, each of which is slightly different

Materials Required

- Large pieces of paper enough for one per group
- Different colored markers or pens

Instructions

- Divide your class into groups of 3-4 students each. (If you have a small number of students you can have them do this individually, or if you have a large group of students you could make the groups larger or have more than one group doing the same emotion term). Make sure each group has a space to work on with enough room so that they can sit around a large piece of paper and draw on it.
- Give each group a large piece of paper and colored pens. Then assign each group a starting emotion word from the following list. If you have a larger group, it's fine to

have more than one group focused on each emotion word and it may be helpful to compare their two posters in the end.

Happiness	Fear
Sadness	Anger
Compassion	Jealousy

- Ask students to write their starting emotion word in the center of their piece of chart paper in large letters using blue or black colored pens (or you can already have written these words on the chart paper yourself).
- Explain that they will use these starting emotion words to create an “emotion family.” This means a group of emotions that are all related to each other, like members of a family.
- Ask them to add other emotions around the starting emotion word that they feel are related to it. What other emotions would be part of this emotion family?
- Don't be too concerned at this point as to whether the words they put down are all emotions or not or whether the words are nouns or adjectives.
- If necessary or helpful, prompt them with questions like, “What is this emotion like?” “What would we call a little bit of this emotion or a spark of this emotion?” “What would we call a lot of this emotion?” “What would we call a forest fire of this emotion?” “What other emotions might you feel if you're feeling this emotion?”

- Also if necessary or helpful, you can suggest a few terms for them to consider adding to their emotion family, such as:
- **Happiness:** Joy, Excitement, Relieved, Peaceful, Excited, Satisfied, Feeling Good
- **Sadness:** Sorrow, Discouraged, Disappointed, Lonely, Helpless, Hopeless, Feeling Low, Grief
- **Compassion:** Love, Liking, Affection, Endearment, Friendship, Trust, Feeling Close, Feeling Connected
- **Fear:** Anxiety, Worry, Nervousness, Horror, Shock, Desperate, Panicked, Dread, Feeling Small
- **Anger:** Frustration, Annoyed, Bitter, Rage, Exasperated, Furious
- **Jealousy:** Envy, Resentment, Begrudging, Feeling Rivalry, Feeling Competitive
- As they add in related emotions, invite them to draw facial expressions, emojis, or other illustrations for each of the emotion terms on their chart paper.
- Once each group has had 3-5 minutes to work on their emotion family, rotate the groups by asking each group to get up and move in a clockwise fashion to the next emotion chart. Alternatively, you can ask each group to pass their chart on to the next group in a clockwise fashion. This way, each group should have a new emotion chart to work on.
- Once the groups have rotated, ask each group to examine what's already on the poster - if you have time, give them one minute to look without adding anything, then ask them to look again for 5 seconds or so and notice something they did not see before - and then add any words they feel should belong to that emotion family. They can again add facial expressions, emojis, or other illustrations for any terms they add. Allow them a few minutes to add any emotion words they can. They may not be able to add many, so this can be short. Students may also add a checkmark next to words or illustrations already listed that resonate with them.
(2 minutes)
- Next ask each group to add in some sensations someone might feel in the body if they were feeling a particular emotion in this emotion family. Ask them to write sensation words next to or around the emotion word they are describing. They can use a different colored pen (such as red) for the sensation words. Some sensation words may apply to more than one emotion in the emotion family. They can indicate this by drawing lines connecting the sensation to multiple emotion words if they like. Give them 3-5 minutes to add sensation words.
- Depending on time, you can continue to circulate and rotate the groups and emotion families, asking students to add to each family, or you can stop at this point. When you feel they are ready, stop for group sharing.

- Invite each group to share, one by one, asking:
 - *“What was your starting emotion?”*
 - *What other emotions are in that emotion family?*
 - *What sensations tend to happen when one feels those emotions?*
 - *What surprises you or interests you about what someone else wrote? Explain.*
 - *Would anyone like to add an emotion or a sensation to this emotion family? (If so, invite them to write it on the chart.)*
 - *Now let me ask you a new question: What thoughts might go through someone’s head if they were feeling these emotions?”* (Write a few of the sample thoughts on the chart paper as the students share.)
- If you had groups double up on the emotion words, ask them to notice what’s similar and different about posters for the same emotion word.
- **Save these emotion family charts, as they will be used later.**

Teaching Tips

- You may want to have the questions above written out or projected for students to see as they are working.
- Alternative Instructions: You may choose to administer this activity by using stations where groups or individuals move to posters that contain a single emotion word. Groups or

individuals can rotate after 3 minutes. When they end up back at the emotion word they began, then the whole group can share together.

Sample Script

- *“Remember when we talked about emotion families? Who can remind us what an emotion family is?”*
- *Today we are going to work in groups on specific emotions to make posters of those emotions’ families.*
- *I’ll assign your group an emotion word and someone in your group will write it in the middle of your poster. After that, everyone in the group will begin to brainstorm and write down other words that have similar meaning or are related to the emotion word. Go ahead and get started.”*
- As they work, you can use these prompts to help spur more brainstorming:
 - *“What is this emotion like?”*
 - *What would we call a little bit of this emotion or a spark of this emotion be?*
 - *What would we call a lot of this emotion?*
 - *What would we call a forest fire of this emotion?*
 - *What other emotions might you feel if you’re feeling this emotion?*
 - *Feel free to draw facial expressions, emojis, or other illustrations of the emotion terms on your posters.*

- Now we're going to rotate to another emotion family and see if we can add to what the previous group made. Before you write anything on the poster though, you are going to pause to observe the poster for about 5 seconds and then try to add something new – a word, a drawing, whatever you think the poster needs to further explain the emotion. You may just add checkmarks next to words or drawings you agree with. [Instruct them to rotate as you previously decided, then give them 5 seconds to view the charts, and then about a minute to add to the chart.]
- Now, let's pause and transition to thinking about sensations. See if you can add some sensations someone might feel if they were experiencing an emotion in this family. Write the sensation words next to the emotion word you are describing. Draw lines if the sensation fits with more than one emotion word.
- [Depending on your time, you may continue to rotate after this, or you can stop at this point and begin group sharing.]
- Let's all come back together as a large group and have a brief discussion. Each group will share out about their emotion family. Which group would like to go first?
 - What was your starting emotion?
 - What other emotions in that emotion family?
 - What sensations tend to happen when one feels those emotions?

- What surprises you or interests you about what someone else wrote? Explain.
- Would anyone like to add an emotion or a sensation to this emotion family? [If so, invite them to write it on the chart.]
- Now let me ask you a new question: What thoughts might go through someone's head if they were feeling these emotions?

Write a few of the sample thoughts on the chart paper as the students share. If you had groups double up on the emotion words, ask them to notice what's similar and different about posters for the same emotion word. Save the charts they make, as they will be used later.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 4 minutes

Instructions

- Do a brief grounding/resourcing activity, followed by a meta-awareness practice, to help the class be calm again and to encourage reflection.
- After the meta-awareness practice, ask if they noticed sensations, thoughts, or emotions.
- Remind students that they have already learned several tools that may be helpful for regulating themselves should they ever experience unpleasant thoughts, sensations, or emotions.

Sample Script

- *"Talking about emotions can bring up emotions in the body and mind. Let's do a brief reflective practice in silence to help calm*

ourselves. You can close your eyes or lower them to the ground.

- Let's imagine one of our resources.
- If someone did something kind for you recently, or if you were kind to someone else, you can feel free to use that as your resource.
- If you'd rather do grounding, you can find a comfortable way to sit or something comfortable to hold or touch.
- Let's now take a few moments to think about our resource or pay attention to our grounding. [Pause.]
- Now let's do tracking and pay attention to the sensations inside our bodies.
- If you find a pleasant or neutral sensation just pay attention to that and watch it. See if it changes or stays the same. [Pause.]
- If you haven't found a pleasant or neutral sensation, see if you can shift to another part of your body to find a place that feels better. [Pause.]
- Now that we are a bit more comfortable, let's just rest our minds and notice whatever comes up in our experience.
- There might be thoughts, there might be memories, sensations, or emotions.
- We're going to watch and notice in silence without reacting to or judging our experience.
- Remember that you can return to resourcing or grounding if you ever feel uncomfortable. Otherwise let's just observe our minds and

experience for a few moments. [Pause for 60 seconds or longer.]

- Let's open or raise our eyes again now.
- Would anyone like to share what they noticed?
- Did anyone notice any sensations?
- Did anyone notice any thoughts?
- Did anyone notice any emotions?"

If students share that they experienced disturbing thoughts, sensations, or emotions, remind them of the skills they have learned thus far to help regulate themselves: Help Now! strategies, grounding, resourcing, or shifting to a neutral or pleasant sensation in the body.

DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

Instructions

- "What stood out for you when we made our emotion families?"
- What surprised you?
- What did you learn about emotions?
- Are there any thoughts or questions you have about emotions?"

OPTIONAL REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

30 minutes to several days

Allow students to pick an emotion families chart that they would like to illustrate. After each student has picked a chart, and thereby divided themselves into groups, have each group illustrate their chart, starting afresh on a large piece of chart paper or any other suitable surface. Have them begin by discussing among themselves the way they would like to approach their illustration. Then allow them to collaboratively draw their illustration that depicts that particular emotion family. If they like, they can put in the individual emotion terms in the illustration also. Alternatively, students could make collages (or a combo of both) if you are able to provide magazines and other materials that have pictures that may be cut up. This project could be done in a session or multiple sessions. When the projects are completed, have each group share their project and explain why they illustrated that emotion family the way they did.

OPTIONAL INSIGHT ACTIVITY

8-10 minutes

If you have internet access in your classroom, have your students compare the charts they created to the “emotion families” available on Paul and Eve Ekman’s website “Atlas of Emotions,” available at www.atlasofemotions.org. Note that this website is currently only available in English and Spanish.

Happiness
Fear
Sadness
Anger
Compassion
Jealousy

*Sparks of Emotion***PURPOSE**

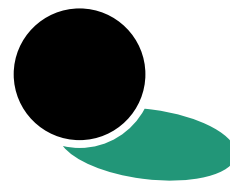
The purpose of this learning experience is to introduce the concept of emotions, how they arise, and how they can escalate, through use of a story and activity. This leads to an

exploration of how emotions differ from thoughts and sensations, and how all three (emotions, thoughts, and sensations) relate to each other.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Learn how emotions can arise from events and can escalate.
- Learn how past experience can influence our emotions.
- Learn how emotional responses to events can vary from person to person.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS**Attention & Self-Awareness****MATERIALS REQUIRED**

- Pictures of the spark and forest fire (these can be the same ones that you used earlier from Chapter 3)
- 2 pieces of rope or string, approximately 20 feet long each
- The provided story and questions

LENGTH

30 minutes

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“Let’s prepare for a short attention practice. How do we want our body to be?”*
- *First we’ll take a comfortable and upright posture. Then we’ll keep our eyes on the ground or close them.*
- *Before we strengthen our attention, we’ll do some resourcing or grounding to calm our bodies. Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let’s just bring our resource to mind. And let’s see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we’re going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s become aware of our breathing. Let’s see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back to your resource or grounding, or just take*

a small break, making sure not to disturb anyone else. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]

- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *You can strengthen your attention by focusing on sensations or by focusing on the breath. It’s your choice - it’s always up to you.*
- *What did you notice?” [Share aloud.]*

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 5 minutes

Overview

This presentation/discussion prepares students for the insight activity that comes after it by reviewing the metaphor of the spark and the forest fire, and by introducing the idea that past experience can influence different people’s reaction to the same event.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Experiences can trigger emotions.
- We can get better at noticing triggers / sparks and where they send us in our zones.
- What triggers our emotions can vary from person to person, because past experience and the state of our nervous system influences how we judge or evaluate a situation (called “appraisal”).

Materials Required

- Pictures of the spark and forest fire (these can be the same ones that you used earlier)

Instructions

- Remind students of the spark and forest fire example.
- Ask them what they recall about the metaphor and how it relates to emotions.
- Using the example of two children, one of whom was once bitten by a dog and is now afraid of dogs (or a similar example), explore how we evaluate situations (“appraisal”) differently based on our past experiences. This idea of appraisal will be developed further as the chapter goes on.

Teaching Tips

Feel free to adapt the story to your context; however, try to keep it short and simple.

Sample Script

- *“Remember when we talked about sparks and forest fires as a metaphor for how emotions can arise? Who can share what they remember about the spark and the forest fire metaphor and how it relates to emotions? [Allow time for sharing.]*
- *So, now I’m going to tell you a story about two kids and I invite you to notice how they evaluate the same situation differently. We’ll discuss it after.*
- *Albert and Alice are two children who go to the same school. One day when they are on the playground, they hear a dog barking. Alice has a dog at home whom she loves to play with very much. So when she hears the barking, her heart starts beating faster,*

thinking there may be a dog nearby for her to play with. But Albert was once bitten by a dog. When he hears the barking his heart also starts beating faster and his body goes stiff, thinking there might be a dog nearby.

- *What emotion or emotions might Alice be feeling? What about Albert?*
- *If the dog’s barking is a spark for Albert, meaning a trigger for fear, is it a trigger of fear for Alice?*
- *Some of their sensations are the same, like their hearts beating faster, but other sensations in their body might be different.*
- *What do you think is happening in Albert’s nervous system? Where might he be in the three zones?*
- *What about Alice?*
- *The bark is the same, but Alice and Albert were judging or evaluating it differently. Alice didn’t evaluate it as dangerous, but maybe Albert did. Our nervous systems are constantly evaluating what is going on around us. This is called “appraisal.”*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 14 minutes

Nelson’s Difficult Day

Overview

This activity involves reading a story about Nelson to the students and asking them to notice possible “sparks” or emotional triggers, where that might send Nelson in the three zones, and what Nelson might do to get back into his resilient zone.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We may experience emotional triggers many times in a single day.
- Emotions can build up over time, resulting in us acting in ways we normally wouldn't.
- If we notice emotional triggers, we can engage in practices that can help us stay in or return to our resilient zone.

Materials Required

- 2 pieces of rope or string, approximately 20 feet long each
- The provided story and questions

Instructions

- Create a representation of the three zones (high zone, resilient zone, and low zone) on the floor, using long lines of tape or string.
- Tell students that you will read a story that involves a character who has a difficult day and experiences small stresses that add up until he finally loses his temper. Ask students to snap their fingers or raise their hands when they notice a "spark" in Nelson's day. The spark is anything that could be an emotional trigger or that could escalate into a forest fire.
- When they indicate a spark, invite the students to stand in the area of the floor in the three zones where they think Nelson would be. Then invite them to share, using one or more of the following questions:
- What was the spark?

- Why did you chose to stand where you are?
- What emotion might Nelson be feeling at this moment?
- What might happen if Nelson had more awareness?
- Has Nelson helped himself decrease the spark at the moment? If so, how?
- What might Nelson be able to do to help himself at this moment?
- For your assistance, asterisks are placed in places where students might notice a spark. If you are going through the story and no one is noticing a spark, you may wish to pause yourself at such places and ask the students whether they think this could be a spark, and where Nelson might be in the three zones.

Teaching Tips

- If you find the provided story inappropriate for your context, feel free to modify it slightly or choose a different story that exhibits a similar situation. You can also abbreviate it if necessary.
- If you prefer not to have the whole group moving within the zones, ask one person who snaps or raises their hand to move to the zone they think Nelson might be in. Then students can discuss if they agree or not and if necessary, another student could move to a different spot in the zones.
- Consider reading the story twice - the first time to simply individually and silently notice the sparks and then the second time have

students snap their fingers or raise their hands when they notice a spark.

- Make sure to leave time for the reflective practice so that students can re-center themselves after this activity.

STORY | Nelson's Difficult Day

"Nelson woke up suddenly. It was late. Somehow he didn't hear his alarm clock go off.

*"Nelson! Get up! You're going to be late for school!" his mother shouted.**

Her voice sounded so loud!

"Okay, okay, I'm coming," he grumbled, but it was too soft for his mother to hear.

"Nelson!" His mother was inside his room now. Her voice sounded even louder. It sounded like a horn blasting in his ear. He felt his ears ringing. They hurt a little bit.

"I heard you!" Nelson said, grumpily.

"Then get out of bed," she said.

Nelson stumbled out of bed and started to put on his clothes. He was feeling tired and a bit irritated and he knew it would be cold outside, so he made sure to get his favorite blue scarf. It was super soft. The instant he felt that scarf go around his neck, he started to feel a little bit better. He rubbed it and it felt so nice on his skin. When he put the scarf on, he always thought of his grandmother who had given it

to him, and he saw her smiling face in his mind. Suddenly he felt a little bit happier.

"Come on!" called his mother. She took his backpack and put his lunch in it together with a little juice box that he really liked, and soon he was in the car on his way to school.

When Nelson got dropped off at school, he saw a group of boys who he didn't like very much. They were a couple years older and often weren't very nice to him. He tried to avoid them as he made his way into the school, but one of them called out at him. The instant he heard that boy's familiar voice, he felt a chill go through his body, right down his spine and his legs seemed to go numb. One of the boys started walking towards him and got near enough to grab at him. Nelson quickly dodged him and hurried into the school building.

At last he was in the classroom, seated at his desk, right next to his friend Albert, who he felt glad to see. His heart was beating so fast and hard, but it felt a little bit better now that he was sitting down and next to his friend. He could barely hear the words of his teacher, Mr. Pink. They called him Mr. Pink because he always wore ties that were pink.

But then he saw Mr. Pink handing out a sheet of paper. Nelson's eyes opened wide. What was this? A test?

"Do we have a test?" Nelson asked Albert.

Albert nodded. "Yeah, didn't you study for it?"

"No, I completely forgot. I didn't study at all!"
Nelson wailed.

He was feeling even more frustrated now.
When did Mr. Pink even mention the test? He
felt angry with Mr. Pink and with himself for not
having remembered it.

Then Mr. Pink put the test on his desk, and
Nelson felt afraid because he knew he would
probably fail the test. His stomach felt all tight
and knotted. He reached for the scarf around
his neck, since sometimes its softness made him
feel better.

But the scarf wasn't there! Nelson realized
that the boy who came after him when he was
dropped off at school must have taken it. When
he realized that, he felt completely deflated
and even more sad and angry. He couldn't
concentrate at all on the test.

At the end of the day, Nelson went outside to
wait for his mother to pick him up from school.

"Please don't let those boys be out here,"
he thought to himself. "That's the last thing I
need."

But sure enough, the boys that didn't like
Nelson were there.

"Where's my mother?" Nelson wondered when
he saw them.

"Hey Nelson!" one of the boys called out to
him. They started walking towards him again.

Just then Nelson's mother arrived. He quickly
opened the door and jumped into the car.

"Where were you!" Nelson shouted at her.
"You're late!"

Nelson's mother looked surprised. "Nelson!
Why are you shouting?"

Nelson took his backpack and threw it on the
floor of the car and stomped on it. "I hate this
school!" he said.

"Nelson! Behave yourself!" said his mother.

Then Nelson looked down and saw that he had
stomped on his lunchbox and the juice box he
had saved, and now the juice was spilling out all
over the car floor and onto his backpack. It was
a complete mess. His anger turned to sadness
and he started to cry.

"Nelson, honey, I'm sorry you're upset," said
his mother. "We all have difficult days. We can
talk about it if you want to. Let's think about
something fun we can do when we get home."

[The End.]



Sample Script

- *“Today we’re going to read a story about a character named Nelson who faces small stresses until he loses his temper. As I read the story aloud, I invite you to listen closely and then to snap your fingers or raise your hand when you notice a “spark” that Nelson experiences.*
- *I’ll pause when I see or hear your fingers and then ask you to move to this space here where we have designated the high zone, resilient zone, and low zone. After you move, I’ll ask a couple volunteers a few questions. Then after we share, we’ll continue the story in the same way. What questions do you have before we begin?*
- *Let’s try it out. [Begin reading the story. When students indicate a spark moment, have them move into the zone they think Nelson’s in and then ask the following questions.]*
- *What was the spark?*
- *Why did you chose to stand where you are?*
- *What emotion might Nelson be feeling at this moment?*
- *What might happen if Nelson had more awareness?*
- *Has Nelson helped himself decrease the spark at the moment? If so, how?*
- *What might Nelson be able to do to help himself at this moment?*

- *Repeat the process above until you finish the story. Allow plenty of time for students to discuss their ideas; this is more important than reading every part of the story.”*

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 4 minutes

Resourcing and Grounding

Overview

Pointing out that we all have difficult days and small stresses can build up, lead your students in a resourcing, grounding, and attention training practice.

Sample Script

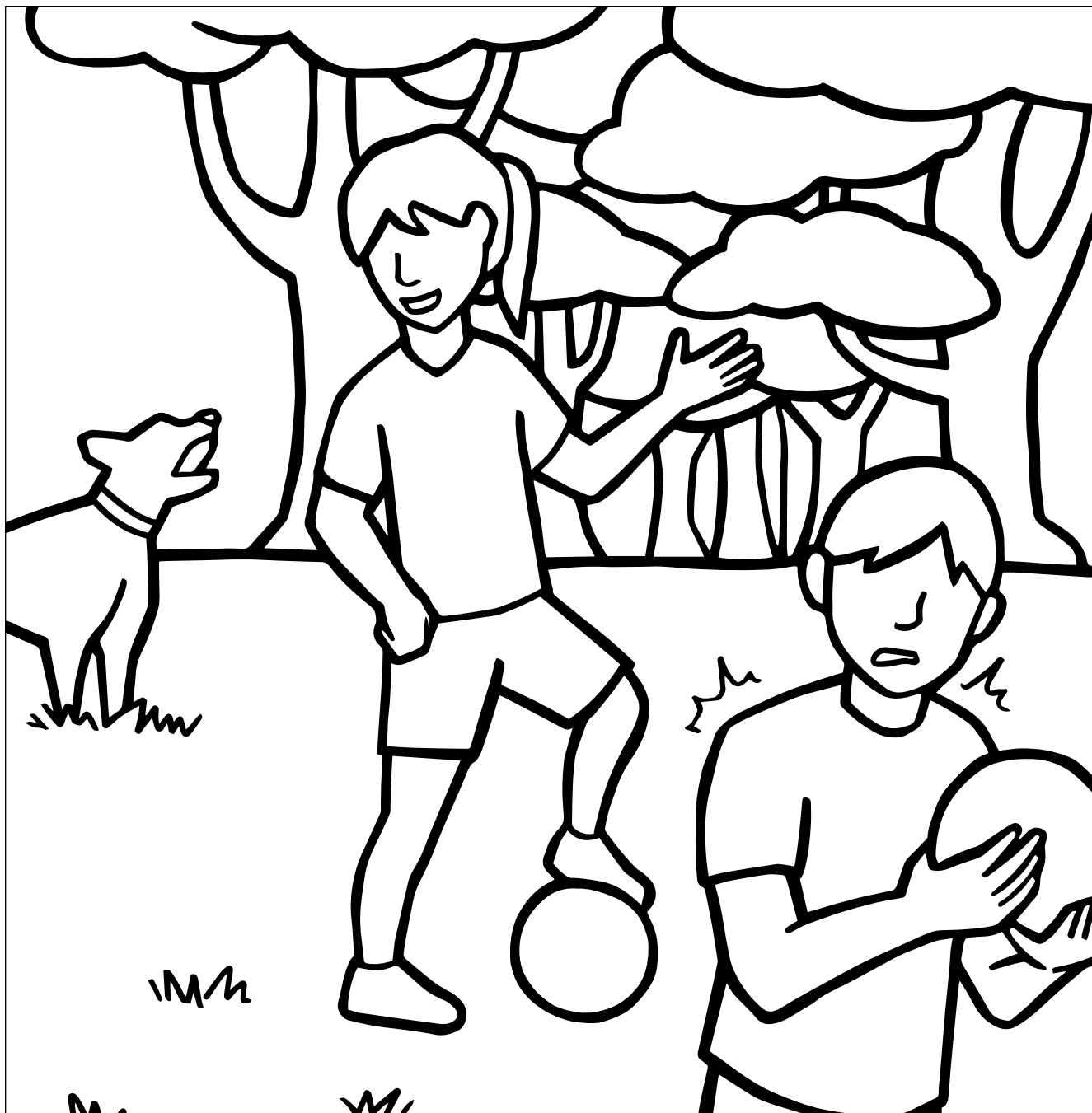
- *“We all experience difficult days sometimes. Each little thing can add up until we feel overwhelmed or stressed out. Then we might do things that we wouldn’t ordinarily do, like lose our temper.*
- *That’s why we practice methods for calming our body and mind, like resourcing, grounding, and training our attention and awareness.*
- *That way, anytime there is a spark, we can notice it and maybe we can relax ourselves or help ourselves.*
- *Let’s do a resourcing practice in silence now.*
- *If someone did something kind for you recently, or if you were kind to someone else, you can feel free to use that as your resource.*
- *If you’d rather do grounding, you can find a comfortable way to sit or something comfortable to hold or touch.*

- *Let's now take a few moments to think about our resource or pay attention to our grounding. [Pause.]*
- *Now let's do tracking and pay attention to the sensations inside our bodies.*
- *If you find a pleasant or neutral sensation just pay attention to that and watch it. See if it changes or stays the same. [Pause.]*
- *If you haven't found a pleasant or neutral sensation, see if you can shift to another part of your body to find a place that feels better. [Pause.]*
- *If you'd like, focus on your breath as you breathe normally. Count your breaths if you wish.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back to your resource or grounding, or just take a small break, making sure not to disturb anyone else. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]*
- *What did you notice on the inside?"*

Debrief | 3 minutes

- *"What are some things that were happening for you when we read this story about Nelson? Any sensations in your body at certain times, what?*
- *What about feelings? When and what were some emotions you felt?*
- *Any thoughts that went through your mind as you were hearing this story?*

Navigating Emotions



Albert and Alice are two children who go to the same school. One day when they are on the playground, they hear a dog barking. Alice has a dog at home whom she loves to play with very much. So when she hears the barking, her heart starts beating faster, thinking there may be a dog nearby for her to play with. But Albert was once bitten by a dog. When he hears the barking his heart also starts beating faster and his body goes stiff, thinking there might be a dog nearby.

*Emotions and Needs***PURPOSE**

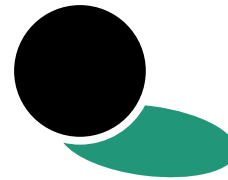
The purpose of this learning experience is to allow students to explore the relationship between needs and emotions, since emotions often arise as a result of our needs being met or going unmet. Seeing this

relationship can help students make sense of their own and others' emotions and is an important precursor to developing greater empathy and compassion both for oneself and others.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Describe their emotions and explore underlying needs.
- Explore how difficult feelings, setbacks, and limitations are common features of everyone's life.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS**Attention & Self-Awareness****MATERIALS REQUIRED**

- A copy of the handout at the end of this learning experience "Our List of Shared Needs"
- Whiteboard or chart paper and markers
- A copy of the "Nelson's Difficult Day" story for each pair or trio to read and mark-up
- An index card or small piece of paper for each student
- Writing utensils for each student

LENGTH

35 minutes

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“Let’s prepare for a short attention practice. How do we want our body to be?”*
- *First we’ll take a comfortable and upright posture. Then we’ll keep our eyes on the ground or close them.*
- *Before we strengthen our attention, we’ll do some resourcing or grounding to calm our bodies. Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let’s just bring our resource to mind. And let’s see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we’re going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s become aware of our breathing. Let’s see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*

- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back to your resource or grounding, or just take a small break, making sure not to disturb anyone else. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]*
- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *You can strengthen your attention by focusing on sensations or by focusing on the breath. It’s your choice - it’s always up to you.*
- *What did you notice?” [Share aloud.]*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 8 minutes

Emotions and Needs

Overview

- In this activity, students will get into groups to fill out a list of “shared needs.” These are basic needs that are common for most or all people.
- They will then explore which emotions might arise if particular needs are met or unmet.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We all have needs.
- Although some of our needs may be specific to ourselves, many are shared among ourselves and others.
- We often experience emotions when our needs are met or go unmet.

Materials Required

For each student:

- A copy of the handout at the end of this learning experience “Our List of Shared Needs”
- Writing utensils for each student
- Whiteboard or chart paper
- Markers

Instructions

- Divide students into groups of two or three and provide each group with a copy of the handout called “Our List of Shared Needs,” provided at the end of this learning experience.
- Tell students that these shared needs listed are a starting point for your conversation about needs. There may be other needs they want to add to this list.
- Tell students to write in additional shared needs using the categories provided (or “Other” for needs that do not fit under any category). If helpful, you can instruct them to first brainstorm by looking for synonyms or related words to category title.
- When they have added needs to each category, ask each group to pick two needs from the list and come up with an example for each of what emotions might arise if that need is met and what emotions might arise if it is unmet.
- Reconvene as an entire class for sharing.

Teaching Tips

- After this activity is finished, collect the list of shared needs from each group. Compile this into a single “Shared Needs List” that you can put on a large piece of chart paper to refer to later, or hang it on the classroom wall. You may choose to write on the chart paper as students share, but this will take considerably more time.
- A sample list of shared needs is provided at the end of this learning experience after the blank one. This is for your reference, although you can also show this to the students to see if there are any needs on the sample list that they would like to add to their own “Shared Needs List” for the class.

Sample Script

- *“Today we’re going to talk about needs. These are things that we need as human beings to survive, to flourish, and to be happy. Take a look at the handout I gave you. What do you notice or wonder? [Allow time for sharing.]”*
- *“This list is just a starting point for us. We’re going to add additional needs to this list.”*
- *“We’re going to work in small groups to brainstorm additional needs that we can put under each category. If we think of a need that doesn’t fit under any of these categories, we’ll put it in ‘Other.’”*
- *“It may be helpful for you to first think of synonyms or related words the words already provided. That can help with brainstorming.”*

- Try to add at least a few needs to each category.”

Allow students to work for some time. Check on progress. When each group has a few additional needs for each category, move on to the next step below.

- *“Now let’s see how needs are related to emotions. Each group will select two needs from your list. Looking at the need, ask “What emotions might arise if this need is met?” and list those emotions. Then we’re going to ask, “What emotions might arise if this need is unmet?” and list those.*
- *Let’s do one together first. We’ll try “safety.” I have a need for safety, and if my need for safety is not met and I feel unsafe, what emotions might I experience? [fear, anxiety] If my need for safety is met and I feel safe, what emotions might I experience? [contentment, happiness, joy]*
- *Now select the two needs your group would like to think about and what emotions might come up if that need is met or unmet.”*

Allow students to work for some time. Check on progress. When you feel enough time has passed, ask each group to share.

- *“What do we notice about needs and emotions?”*
- *If someone who didn’t study emotions said to you “Emotions just come and go. I don’t think there’s any relationship between my emotions and my needs,” what might you say to them?”*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 13 minutes

Exploring Needs

Overview

In this activity, students will re-read “Nelson’s Difficult Day,” but this time they will examine Nelson’s needs and how those needs being met or unmet are related to his emotions.

Content/Insights to be Explored

We can often understand our own or another person’s emotions better if we consider needs.

Materials Required

- A copy of the “Nelson’s Difficult Day” story for each pair or trio to read and mark-up
- List of shared needs - either the handout or the class poster

Instructions

- Tell students that you will re-read the story “Nelson’s Difficult Day.” Remind them that the last time you read the story, you noticed and discussed sparks. Tell them this time, they can notice those sparks and emotions that go with them, but they will focus on looking for needs that Nelson has that are or aren’t being met.
- Assign students to groups of four and give each group a copy of the story. (Alternatively, you can do this as a whole-class activity.)
- Tell them to re-read the story together and underline parts where they can see Nelson having a need that is or isn’t being met or addressed or tended to.

- Tell them to label each place they underline with the specific need Nelson is having.
- Have students move back into a large group and invite each group to share out one of Nelson's needs, the emotional response he had to it, and what (if anything) he did to address it.
- Have them find which needs arise that are already on the shared list of needs created earlier, and which are not. If they identified a need not on the list, is it covered already by one on the list? If so, point that out. If not, you can add the new need to the shared needs list.

Teaching Tips

None

STORY | Nelson's Difficult Day

"Nelson woke up suddenly. It was late. Somehow he didn't hear his alarm clock go off.

*"Nelson! Get up! You're going to be late for school!" his mother shouted.**

Her voice sounded so loud!

"Okay, okay, I'm coming," he grumbled, but it was too soft for his mother to hear.

"Nelson!" His mother was inside his room now. Her voice sounded even louder. It sounded like a horn blasting in his ear. He felt his ears ringing. They hurt a little bit.

"I heard you!" Nelson said, grumpily.

"Then get out of bed," she said.

Nelson stumbled out of bed and started to put on his clothes. He was feeling tired and a bit irritated and he knew it would be cold outside, so he made sure to get his favorite blue scarf. It was super soft. The instant he felt that scarf go around his neck, he started to feel a little bit better. He rubbed it and it felt so nice on his skin. When he put the scarf on, he always thought of his grandmother who had given it to him, and he saw her smiling face in his mind. Suddenly he felt a little bit happier.

"Come on!" called his mother. She took his backpack and put his lunch in it together with a little juice box that he really liked, and soon he was in the car on his way to school.

When Nelson got dropped off at school, he saw a group of boys who he didn't like very much. They were a couple years older and often weren't very nice to him. He tried to avoid them as he made his way into the school, but one of them called out at him. The instant he heard that boy's familiar voice, he felt a chill go through his body, right down his spine and his legs seemed to go numb. One of the boys started walking towards him and got near enough to grab at him. Nelson quickly dodged him and hurried into the school building.

At last he was in the classroom, seated at his desk, right next to his friend Albert, who he felt glad to see. His heart was beating so fast and hard, but it felt a little bit better now that he was

sitting down and next to his friend. He could barely hear the words of his teacher, Mr. Pink. They called him Mr. Pink because he always wore ties that were pink.

But then he saw Mr. Pink handing out a sheet of paper. Nelson's eyes opened wide. What was this? A test?

"Do we have a test?" Nelson asked Albert.

Albert nodded. "Yeah, didn't you study for it?"

"No, I completely forgot. I didn't study at all!" Nelson wailed.

He was feeling even more frustrated now. When did Mr. Pink even mention the test? He felt angry with Mr. Pink and with himself for not having remembered it.

Then Mr. Pink put the test on his desk, and Nelson felt afraid because he knew he would probably fail the test. His stomach felt all tight and knotted. He reached for the scarf around his neck, since sometimes its softness made him feel better.

But the scarf wasn't there! Nelson realized that the boy who came after him when he was dropped off at school drop-off must have taken it. When he realized that, he felt completely deflated and even more sad and angry. He couldn't concentrate at all on the test.

At the end of the day, Nelson went outside to wait for his mother to pick him up from school.

"Please don't let those boys be out here," he thought to himself. "That's the last thing I need."

But sure enough, the boys that didn't like Nelson were there.

"Where's my mother?" Nelson wondered when he saw them.

"Hey Nelson!" one of the boys called out to him. They started walking towards him again.

Just then Nelson's mother arrived. He quickly opened the door and jumped into the car.

"Where were you!" Nelson shouted at her. "You're late!"

Nelson's mother looked surprised. "Nelson! Why are you shouting?"

Nelson took his backpack and threw it on the floor of the car and stomped on it. "I hate this school!" he said.

"Nelson! Behave yourself!" said his mother.

Then Nelson looked down and saw that he had stomped on his lunchbox and the juice box he had saved, and now the juice was spilling out all over the car floor and onto his backpack. It was a complete mess. His anger turned to sadness and he started to cry.

“Nelson, honey, I’m sorry you’re upset,” said his mother. “We all have difficult days. We can talk about it if you want to. Let’s think about something fun we can do when we get home.”

Sample Script

- *“Who remembers the story of Nelson we read recently? What was the activity we did with that story last time? Yes, we looked for sparks and discussed how he moved through the zones.*
- *We’re going to re-read the story of Nelson’s day and the small moments of stress he experienced. This time, we are going to focus on looking for the needs that Nelson has that are or aren’t being met. We’re going to then connect to those needs to the emotions he feels.*
- *Each of your groups has a copy of the story. Please select one person in your group to read the story aloud slowly. The rest of you will raise your hand to stop the speaker whenever you notice a need that is being met or unmet. Underline 3-5 words that reference the need. Do this for the whole story.*
- *[Give students time to process the story this way. Once they have finished, move on to the next step.]*
- *Ok, now, look at the list of shared needs and discuss with your groups:*
- *Which needs are on the list? Which needs are not?*

- *Select one need Nelson had and determine what emotion came up for him in relation to that need. Talk to your group about your ideas. Listen to your group about their ideas.*
- *Let’s come back together as a whole group. Let’s have each group share out one of Nelson’s needs, the emotion that came up for him, and what he did to take care of himself (if anything). [Give students time to share.]*
- *That was great. You all noted many needs present in the story and you talked about Nelson’s emotional response to some of those needs and what he did or could do to take care of himself. Thank you for your deep thinking about needs and emotions today.”*

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 7 minutes

My Needs

Overview

- Students will do a brief reflective practice on what need they feel is most important to them right now, what is helping them meet it, and what it would feel like if their need was completely met.
- They will combine this with the tracking of sensations in the body.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- What needs are most important can vary from person to person, or from time to time.
- Thinking about our needs being met or unmet affects our emotional state and our nervous system.

Materials Required

- Shared needs list for viewing
- An index card or small piece of paper for each student
- Writing utensils

Instructions

- Ask students to put their name on the index card.
- Ask them to identify for themselves a particular need that they feel is especially important to them right now and write it on their index card. It can be from the shared needs list or a need they feel that is not on the list.
- Explain this is a private practice and they won't have to share what they write with anyone, unless they want to.
- Ask them to reflect silently on what things in their life are helping them meet this need, and to write these down on the card. If they can't think of anything helping them to meet their need, ask them to write what they could imagine happening that would help them meet it.
- Ask them to reflect on what it would feel like to have their need met completely. Then ask them to notice what this feels like on the inside (tracking). Give them the opportunity to ground or resource if they notice unpleasant sensations.
- Invite anyone who wants to share to do so.

- Invite them to put their index card in their resource kit or hand it in so you can read it privately.

Teaching Tips

If students choose to give you their cards, this can provide valuable information on their current state.

Sample Script

- *"Now let's do a brief reflective practice in silence."*
- *Let's each take a look at our shared needs list.*
- *Choose a particular need that you feel is especially important to you right now and circle it.*
- *Or if you feel a need that is not on the list, add it to the list and then circle it.*
- *We're going to do this privately, so no one will see what you circle or write, and you won't have to share it with anyone.*
- *Now let's take a moment to think. What are things in your life that help you meet this need? You can write these things down if you like.*
- *If you can't think of anything that is helping you meet this need, then think about what could happen that would help you meet this need. Write this down if you like. [Pause 30-60 seconds.]*
- *Now let's take a moment to think: What would it feel like to have this need completely met?*

Take a moment to imagine this. [Pause 30 seconds.]

- Now take a moment to check what you notice on the inside. If you notice any unpleasant sensations, remember you can always shift to a place in your body that feels better, or you can do grounding or resourcing. [Pause 30 seconds.]
- Thank you. Would anyone like to share? You don't have to.
- Now you can place your card in your resource kit. Or if you want to share it with me, you can hand it to me. I will keep them private."

DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- "Did thinking about your needs affect your nervous system? Did you notice any changes in your body when thinking about your need or thinking about it being met completely?"
- What are some things that were happening for you when we re-read this story about Nelson, focusing on needs?
- Have you learned anything about the relationship between needs and emotions that you hadn't thought of before?"

Our List of Shared Needs

Compassion

Physical Well-Being

Freedom

Equality

Safety

Meaning

Play/Fun

Trust

Other

Sample List of Shared Needs

Compassion

acceptance
affection
belonging
closeness
community
empathy
friendship
inclusion
love
nurturing
respect
self-respect

Physical Well-Being

air
exercise
food
nature
rest
relaxation
shelter
sleep
water

Freedom

choice
confidence
education
independence
knowledge
self-expression
space

Equality

equal rights
fairness
justice
reciprocity

Safety

home
peace
security
stability
shelter

Meaning

direction
mattering to others
purpose
self-worth
understanding

Enjoyment

beauty
creativity
fun
games
humor
play

Trust

acceptance
consistency
honesty
integrity
openness
order

Other

*Emotion Timelines***PURPOSE**

The purpose of this learning experience is to introduce the idea that although emotions often seem instantaneous and automatic, they actually take place as part of a process that occurs along a timeline. Learning the

stages of this timeline allows students to map the stages of emotions and recognize where they can build greater awareness that can allow them to intervene in the emotion timeline should they wish to do so.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Learn that emotions occur as part of a process.
- Learn the stages of emotion processes.
- Learn how awareness can create a “gap” between stimulus and response.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS

**Attention &
Self-Awareness**

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Print-outs of the “Emotion Timeline” handout provided- 3 copies for each student
- Copies of the Albert and Alice story for each group of 3-4 students (at the end of Learning Experience 3)

LENGTH

30 minutes

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“Let’s prepare for a short attention practice. How do we want our body to be?”*
- *First we’ll take a comfortable and upright posture. Then we’ll keep our eyes on the ground or close them.*
- *Before we strengthen our attention, we’ll do some resourcing or grounding to calm our bodies. Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let’s just bring our resource to mind. And let’s see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we’re going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s become aware of our breathing. Let’s see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back*

to your resource or grounding, or just take a small break, making sure not to disturb anyone else. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]

- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *You can strengthen your attention by focusing on sensations or by focusing on the breath. It’s your choice - it’s always up to you.*
- *What did you notice?” [Share aloud.]*

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 17 minutes

The Emotion Timeline

Overview

- In this activity you will show the emotion timeline and explore the idea of emotions as processes.
- You will introduce the different stages of the emotion timeline and its terminology.
- Students will then form groups to fill out an emotion timeline using a provided story.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Emotions occur as part of a process
- The process has stages that we can identify
- Awareness during the process can create a “gap” between stimulus and response
- With greater awareness, we can influence the process and change its outcome

- With less awareness, strong emotions may lead us to act in ways that harm ourselves or others

Materials Required

- Sample emotion timeline provided at end of learning experience, one for each student pair or trio to write on
- Copies of the Albert and Alice story for each group of 3-4 students.

Instructions

- Show your students the sample emotion timeline.
- Tell them that a timeline is a way of understanding the stages of a process. In this case the process is how an emotion arises and influences behavior. Like most timelines, this one has a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- Discuss any terms in the emotion timeline that they may not understand.
- Divide students into groups of 3 or 4 (or do this activity as a whole class).
- Ask students to speak with their group about what they notice about the diagram of the timeline. Then ask them to share with the whole class.
- Remind them of the provided scenario of Albert and Alice and re-read it to them (or provide a different scenario of your own design).
- Create an emotion timeline for Albert, filling out each section of the emotion timeline.

- Then fill out the emotion timeline for Alice. Notice and discuss any similarities or differences between the two.

Teaching Tips

- You can choose to do this activity as a whole class or arrange for students to do it in pairs or trios and share out afterwards. Alternatively, you could have half the class work on Albert's timeline and the other half work on Alice's. Then for whole class discussion, begin with one group sharing about Albert and the other sharing about Alice.
- Here is some terminology to help you with instruction. Consider how much of this terminology you wish to include, depending on the level of your students. You may wish to introduce these terms gradually over the course of several days or weeks:
 - Emotions begin with a stimulus. A stimulus means anything that provokes a response. Usually this is something novel in the environment (like seeing something, or hearing someone saying something), but stimuli can also be internal (thinking about something or remembering something). The stimulus can also be called a trigger (but this word is more specific and is generally only used for negative stimuli).
 - The stimulus takes place within a context. The context can include: a person's unmet needs; the person's state of the autonomic nervous system (where the person is in the three zones, for example); the person's mood; the person's understanding (or lack

of understanding) of a situation; and things that may have happened in the past that have conditioned a person to react in a certain way.

- The person evaluates or judges the stimulus, usually along a spectrum of positive, negative, or neutral. This is the appraisal (Appraisal means to assess, judge, or evaluate a situation.) Appraisals can be conscious or unconscious, and can happen so fast that they seem automatic.
- If the appraisal is negative or positive, it can result in an emotion. If the appraisal is neutral, it may not elicit any strong emotion.
- If the emotion is strong, it can result in an impulse, which is a compulsion to act in a certain way. (For positive emotions, sometimes the impulse is just to enjoy or bask in that emotion.)
- The person can have more or less awareness of the emotion and its impulse or not. This awareness can include heedfulness with regard to behaving in a way that might harm oneself or others. Greater awareness can create the sense of a “gap” between the stimulus and response. Less awareness can mean that a stimulus leads to an automatic or almost automatic response with little or no gap for intervening.
- The impulse can lead to a behavior or response. If the person doesn’t have awareness or heedfulness, they may

engage in the action that was compelled by the emotion. If they did have awareness and heedfulness, they may have chosen a different behavior. If the person chooses not to act outwardly, that choice is still an action.

- The behavior leads to a result or outcome that depends on what the behavior was. For example, getting angry and shouting at someone harshly may affect how that person views you, while restraining oneself and responding calmly leads to a different result.
- It may be helpful to put the terms above on card stock and hold them up, or have students hold them up, as you read a scenario aloud.
- If you feel this terminology is too challenging, consider at first just using the terms “beginning,” “middle” and “end” to refer to the initial stimulus and appraisal (beginning), the emotion and impulse (middle), and the response/behavior and result (end).

Sample Scenario

(Note that this is the same story used in Chapter 4, Learning Experience 3. You can find a handout there to copy for your students if you wish.)

“Albert and Alice are two children who go to the same school. One day they hear a dog barking. Alice has a dog at home whom she loves to play with very much. So when she hears the barking, her heart starts beating faster, thinking there may be a dog nearby for her to

play with. But Albert was once bitten by a dog. When he hears the barking his heart also starts beating faster and his body goes stiff, thinking there might be a dog nearby.”

Sample Script

- “Today we’re going to be looking at a timeline. What do you already know about timelines?”
- Timelines are helpful for understanding something that is a process. A process is something that has stages and that takes place over time.
- Do you think emotions are a process or part of a process that takes place over time? [Allow for sharing to stimulate thinking. There is no need to correct answers or ideas at this point.]
- We’re going to examine emotions as part of a process and slow that process down a lot so that we can look at each stage. It’s as if we were placing an emotion under a microscope to investigate it.
- Let’s take a look at this emotion timeline. Take 15-30 seconds to silently examine it by yourself, seeing what you notice and what you wonder about. [Ring the chime after 15-30 seconds.]
- What do you notice? What do you wonder about? Are there some words that are unclear or unfamiliar to you? [Allow time for sharing.]
- Before we begin the activity, let’s talk about just a couple of the terms here that I thought might be new to you.
- Who has heard of the word “stimulus”? What is a stimulus?
- A stimulus means something that causes a response. One day, I heard a loud sound, and I jumped up in fright and surprise. What was the stimulus? What was my response?
- Who has heard the word “context” before? Does anyone have an idea of what “context” might mean in terms of the emotion timeline? [Allow time for sharing.]
- Context here means the current state of things based on what’s come before. [You may choose to write the definition on the board.] We have an inner context and an outer context. The inner context might be how we’re feeling that day or what just happened or what happened a long time ago. The outer context is what’s going on around us at that moment.
- Let’s think about my story. After I looked around I saw the loud sound came from some nearby construction workers. Then I heard the loud sound again, but I didn’t jump this time and I wasn’t afraid. Why? That’s because of context. Now I already knew what it was and that it was nothing to be afraid of. So the stimulus was the same, but the context was different, so my response was different.
- Who found the word “appraisal” new to them? This may seem like a strange word, but it’s very important for understanding emotions. Based on where it is in the timeline, what do you think it means? It comes between “stimulus” and “emotion.”

[Allow time for sharing.]

- *Appraisal means to assess, judge, or evaluate a situation. [You may choose to write the definition on the board.] In the context of emotions, appraisals often happen really fast, so we're going to slow the process down and really think about that as we look at the story.*
- *So the first time when I heard the loud sound, my appraisal was it could be dangerous. So I got scared. But the second time I heard the sound, I was aware that it was construction work. So my appraisal was that it was not dangerous. And I didn't get scared. Since I didn't get scared, I didn't jump. I had a different response.*
- *Let's go back to the story about Albert and Alice and the barking dog. Let's see if you can work in groups and use the emotion timeline to investigate what's happening in that story.*
- *Let's first do the emotion timeline for Albert. Then we'll do it for Alice."*

Distribute copies of the story to each group or have it in large font up in a place where everyone can see it. Depending on how you choose to have your group work on this, allow enough time for them to work. Let them grapple with the Albert timeline, monitoring progress. When it seems like everyone has completed most of the timeline, return to a whole group to discuss. Repeat the process for Alice.

- *"Now that we have completed timelines for both kids, what is similar and what is different about them? [Allow time for sharing.]*

- *Why are there differences? [Allow time for sharing. There are differences because they have different contexts; because they have different prior experiences; because they have different personalities; etc.]*
- *Why are there similarities? [Allow time for sharing. There are similarities because they are both human beings; they both have bodies and nervous systems; they are both children; etc.]*
- *What do you think it might this idea of making an emotion timeline? Is there anything that you found interesting or new?" [Allow time for sharing.]*
- *Earlier we've talked about awareness: being aware of what's happening in our bodies and in our minds. What role do you think awareness plays in the emotion timeline?*

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 6 minutes

Overview

- Students will use a blank emotion timeline to describe a moment when they experienced happiness, kindness, or compassion.
- They will then engage in a resourcing or grounding practice.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Positive experiences can also be mapped on the emotion timeline.
- Examining our experiences of emotions can deepen them and we can feel this in the body.

Materials Required

One blank emotion timeline for each student

Instructions

- Provide each student with a blank emotion timeline.
- Explain that you will do a reflective practice in silence using a memory of a moment of happiness, kindness, or compassion that they experienced, and then mapping that to the timeline.
- Allow them a moment to remember such a moment. Explain that they can imagine such a moment also.
- Allow them a few minutes to map the experience to the timeline.
- Follow this by a brief 1-minute resourcing practice using the experience they just mapped. They can always do grounding as an alternative instead.
- Allow for sharing, first asking what sensations they notice on the inside, then what experience they mapped.

Teaching Tips

None

Sample Script

- *"Let's now do a reflective practice in silence using the emotion timeline.*
- *First let's take a moment to reflect on a time when we experienced happiness, kindness, or compassion. It could be something recent or*

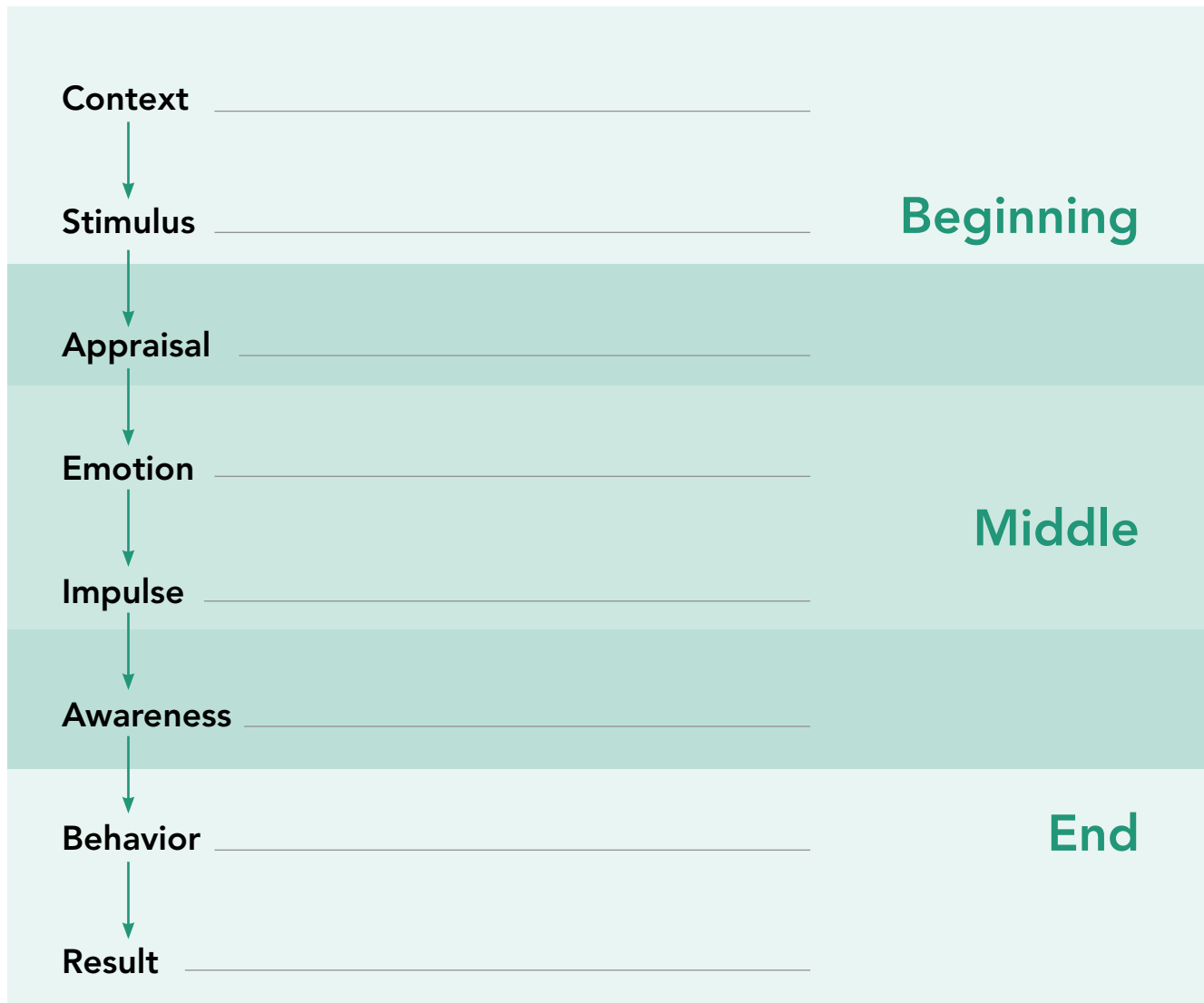
something a long time ago. We're going to use this as our resource.

- *We can also imagine something happening that we would really like. [Pause 15-30 seconds.]*
- *Let's now map this on our emotion timeline.*
- *You can start anywhere you like. Maybe it's easiest to start with the emotion you felt and then work backwards.*
- *Was there a stimulus or something that happened?*
- *Was there an appraisal? When nice things happen to us, our appraisal might be just thinking or feeling, "This is good" or "This is positive" or "I really like this." Or you can just put a "plus" sign by the appraisal if you felt what happened was positive.*
- *Did you do anything after that emotion? Was there an impulse or a behavior? Sometimes there isn't, and that's okay. [Allow a minute or two of silence while the students map their experience to the timeline.]*
- *Now let's sit for a moment and use this as our resource. Or if you can prefer, you can do grounding.*
- *We'll do this by tracking any sensations in our bodies, particularly positive or neutral ones. [Pause 30-60 seconds.]*
- *What do you notice on the inside right now?*
- *Would anyone like to share the experience they mapped on the timeline?"*

DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- *“Are we learning about emotions that you might not have thought about before?”*
- *What would happen if people in our society had more awareness and could have more of a gap between stimulus and response?*
- *What’s something that you learned today that you’d like to remember later?”*

Emotion Timeline



List of Tools to Employ

*Emotion Timelines in Action***PURPOSE**

By acting out scenarios across the emotion timeline, students will learn that emotions (and the behaviors they can lead to) unfold along a process, even if they often seem automatic and instantaneous. Understanding

emotion timelines will help them learn how they notice, and potentially intervene at, different stages of the process, thereby turning potentially problematic outcomes into more beneficial ones.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Explore the process of emotion timelines experientially.
- Develop their understanding of the ways emotions are generated and unfold.
- Explore stages at which they may be able to intervene in the unfolding of emotions and behaviors.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS**Attention & Self-Awareness****MATERIALS REQUIRED**

- Sample emotion timeline provided at end of learning experience (3 per student)
- Scenarios, provided below
- Resource kits for students to place timelines in after the reflective practice

LENGTH

30 minutes

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“Let’s prepare for a short attention practice. How do we want our body to be?”*
- *First we’ll take a comfortable and upright posture. Then we’ll keep our eyes on the ground or close them.*
- *Before we strengthen our attention, we’ll do some resourcing or grounding to calm our bodies. Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let’s just bring our resource to mind. And let’s see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we’re going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s become aware of our breathing. Let’s see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back*

to your resource or grounding, or just take a small break, making sure not to disturb anyone else. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]

- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *You can strengthen your attention by focusing on sensations or by focusing on the breath. It’s your choice - it’s always up to you.*
- *What did you notice?” [Share aloud.]*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 17 minutes

Acting Out Emotion Timelines

Overview

- In this activity, students will get into groups to chart out a given scenario on a blank emotion timeline sheet.
- They will then act out the scenario for the rest of the class, followed by a discussion of what happened in the scenario at different stages of the timeline.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Each emotion is a process
- The process has stages (stimulus, appraisal, emotion, behavior, consequence)
- The process takes place in a context
- Having more or less awareness can change the course of emotions and behavior

Materials Required

- Print-outs of the “Emotion Timeline Scenarios,” provided at the end of this learning experience
- Sample Emotion Timeline Diagram (blank), provided at the end of this learning experience, 2 per student

Instructions

- Remind students of the last activity you did together in which they explored the emotion timeline with Albert and Alice.
- Divide your students into groups of 3 or 4 and give each group a scenario.
- First, each group will fill out the emotion timeline using the provided “emotion timeline scenarios.” They will do this twice: first to show how the scenario might play out if the main character has more awareness of their emotions; and second to show how the scenario might play out if the main character had less awareness of their emotions. (Allow them 4 or more minutes for this).
- Next, each group will plan to act out the more awareness scenario for the rest of the class, keeping the stages of the timeline in mind (Allow them 4 or more minutes for this). Students can “play” the characters in the scenario, but they can also “play” sensations, emotions, or thoughts.
- Bring the class back together and invite each group to act out their skit, while others observe.
- Only if you feel the acting may have been unclear, read the scenario aloud for the class so that it’s clear what happened.
- Ask the students who were watching to explain what happened at each point on the timeline, using some or all of the following questions:
 - *“What was the stimulus?”*
 - *What was the context?*
 - *What was the appraisal (evaluation or judgment)?*
 - *Which emotion families were involved?*
 - *Which particular emotions do you think came up?*
 - *What physical sensations might the main character have had in his or her body?*
 - *What might have happened if the character had had less awareness of their emotions?*
 - *What emotional state do you think the character was in at the end of the scenario?”*
- Move on to the next group, asking them to act out their scenario, followed by questions, and repeat.

Teaching Tips

- The emotion timeline scenarios are also provided at the end of this learning experience in card form for ease of printing so you can hand one to each group.

- Remember to alter the names of the characters in the scenarios if they are the same as any of your students.
- Write the questions on the board or a piece of chart paper if that is helpful.
- Blank scenario cards are provided if you want to create your own emotion timeline scenarios, or you can allow your students to create their own custom scenarios for a particular emotion family.

Emotion Timeline Scenarios

(These are also provided at the end of this learning experience as cards that you can print out.)

1. On his 13th birthday, Desmond comes home after school. He's feeling a bit low because no one wished him happy birthday during the day at school. When he opens the door and walks into his house, suddenly his whole family and a lot of his friends shout "SURPRISE!" He looks around and sees they have planned a big party for him.
2. Imani sees a group of girls she doesn't know playing a game that looks interesting. "Can I join you?" she asks. "Of course!" they say, and invite her over.
3. During recess, a classmate with muddy shoes steps on Marianne's foot, dirtying her brand new shoes. Her family doesn't have much money, but her father had bought her these shoes just last week as a present.
4. Leonard loves his little sister Lisa very much. Lisa has been teased badly at school. One day, Leonard sees a kid the same age as his sister being teased during lunch and Leonard feels his chest tighten.
5. Kimball is very excited for a trip his family is going on to see relatives. A few days before they are supposed to leave, his parents tell him that the trip has been canceled and they aren't going, but they don't explain why.
6. Walking to school each day, Lewis passes a man asking for money for food. One day Lewis sees that the man has a crutch and a cast on his leg. Lewis feels tears come to his eyes. He brings his mother to the man and they give the man several sandwiches and water.
7. Michelle's parents have been arguing lately. This morning on her way out of the door, she heard her dad say he's going to work late tonight. She's never heard him say that before, so she is not sure what that means and she notices a chill go through her body.
8. Carlos's group of close friends are used to going to the movies every Friday night. This Friday, though, Carlos's mom says it's getting too expensive so he can't go with them. He has to stay at home, knowing his friends are at the movies.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 6 minutes

Overview

Using the emotion timeline sheet, students will recall a time when they experienced a stimulus or an emotion that could have caused them to act in an inappropriate way, but they were able to respond appropriately.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Awareness allows us to prevent stimuli from leading to automatic responses.
- We already have awareness, and we can develop it further.

Materials Required

- One blank emotion timeline sheet per student.
- Resource kits for students to place timelines in after the practice.

Instructions

- Give an emotion timeline sheet to each student and explain that they will do this activity in silence to help with concentration.
- Explain that this is a private reflective activity, so sharing is optional.
- Ask students to recall a challenging time when they experienced a stimulus or an emotion that could have caused them to act in an inappropriate way, but they were able to respond appropriately.
- Provide examples to help stimulate thinking.

- If they cannot remember such a time, allow them to imagine a scenario where something challenging happens to them, and instead of acting out from a negative emotion, they are able to use awareness and respond in a beneficial way.
- Allow students to chart out the experience they are remembering on the emotion timeline (3+ minutes)
- Invite anyone who wishes to share to do so.
- Allow them to put their sheets in their resource kit or to pass it to you if they wish to. Remind them that you will keep all these reflective practices confidential.

Teaching Tips

Reflective practices can always be preceded or followed by grounding or resourcing. If you find that students share things that are emotionally activating for themselves or other students, you are strongly encouraged to engage in a few minutes of grounding or resourcing to help them settle their bodies and minds again before you conclude the learning experience or move on to another activity.

Sample script

- *“Now we are going to do a reflective practice using the emotion timeline. You will do this activity in silence so you can concentrate on it. You will have the chance to share at the end if you want to, but this is a private activity, so sharing aloud is optional.”*

- Here is another copy of the emotion timeline sheet. Don't write on it yet. Listen first, please.
- If you feel comfortable doing so, please close your eyes or lower your gaze to the floor, not looking at anything in particular. My eyes will be open.
- As you rest there, I invite you to recall a challenging time when you experienced a stimulus or an emotion that could have caused you to act in an inappropriate way but instead you found yourself able to respond in a way that was appropriate, constructive, and beneficial to yourself and others.
- For example, perhaps you were really hungry and someone cut in front of you in the line in the cafeteria. Maybe you felt a surge of an emotion and the desire to move that person out of your way. However, you did not do that - rather, you ended up taking a deep breath and ignoring them or maybe you kindly asked them to move to the back of the line. You responded in an appropriate way that did not cause harm to yourself or someone else.
- If you cannot remember a time like that, try to imagine a scenario in the future in which something challenging happens to you and instead of acting out from a negative emotion, you are able to use awareness and respond in a way that is helpful to yourself and others.
- If you are ready, take a look at the blank emotion timeline in front of you. Begin charting the experience you were just thinking

of. We'll work silently for about 3-5 minutes. [When there is 1 minute left of work time, alert students of this.]

- Now we have a little bit of time to share. Who would like to share something about their timeline or about the experience of charting it out. [Allow for sharing as time allows.]
- Ok, thank you all for your thoughtfulness during the reflective practice. I invite you to put your timeline in your resource kit or to pass it to me if you would like me to see it."

DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- "What are we learning about emotions that you might not have thought about before?"
- What's something that you learned today that you'd like to remember later?"

OPTIONAL INSIGHT ACTIVITY

Multiple Sessions Creating Our Own Emotion Timeline

Materials Required

- Large sheets of paper, enough for 1 per group of 3-4 students
- Markers
- Handout provided at end of learning experience
- Optional: emotion families posters the class made previously

Instructions

- Divide into groups of 3-4 students. Have each group pick an emotion family that they would like to create a timeline for. Provide each group with a large piece of chart paper.
- Each group is going to create their own illustrated emotion timeline for that emotion family.
 - Ask them: If you wanted to explain to other students what an emotion timeline is for this particular emotion family, how would you do it?
 - Ask them to include each item on the sample (such as context, stimulus, emotion, etc.) They should also come up with example scenarios that fit in the timeline. These examples should show what happens when people employ their tools of mindfulness, awareness, heedfulness, tracking, etc., as well as what happens when people are not using such tools. (Provide a handout for each group to ensure they know what to include on their timelines or simply write the requirements on the board.)
- When each group has finished creating their timeline, allow them to present their timeline and share it with the rest of the class. Then you can hang the timelines up on the classroom walls or elsewhere in the school.

Teaching Tips

If necessary, you can have your students do this in a single sitting if you give them 10-15 minutes for each group to work on their timeline. It is better, however, if you allow them more time and spread this out over multiple sessions. For example, you could have them do this activity over three sessions of 20-30 minutes each. This will allow them to spend more time thinking about their timeline and illustrating it, as well as coming up with specific examples.

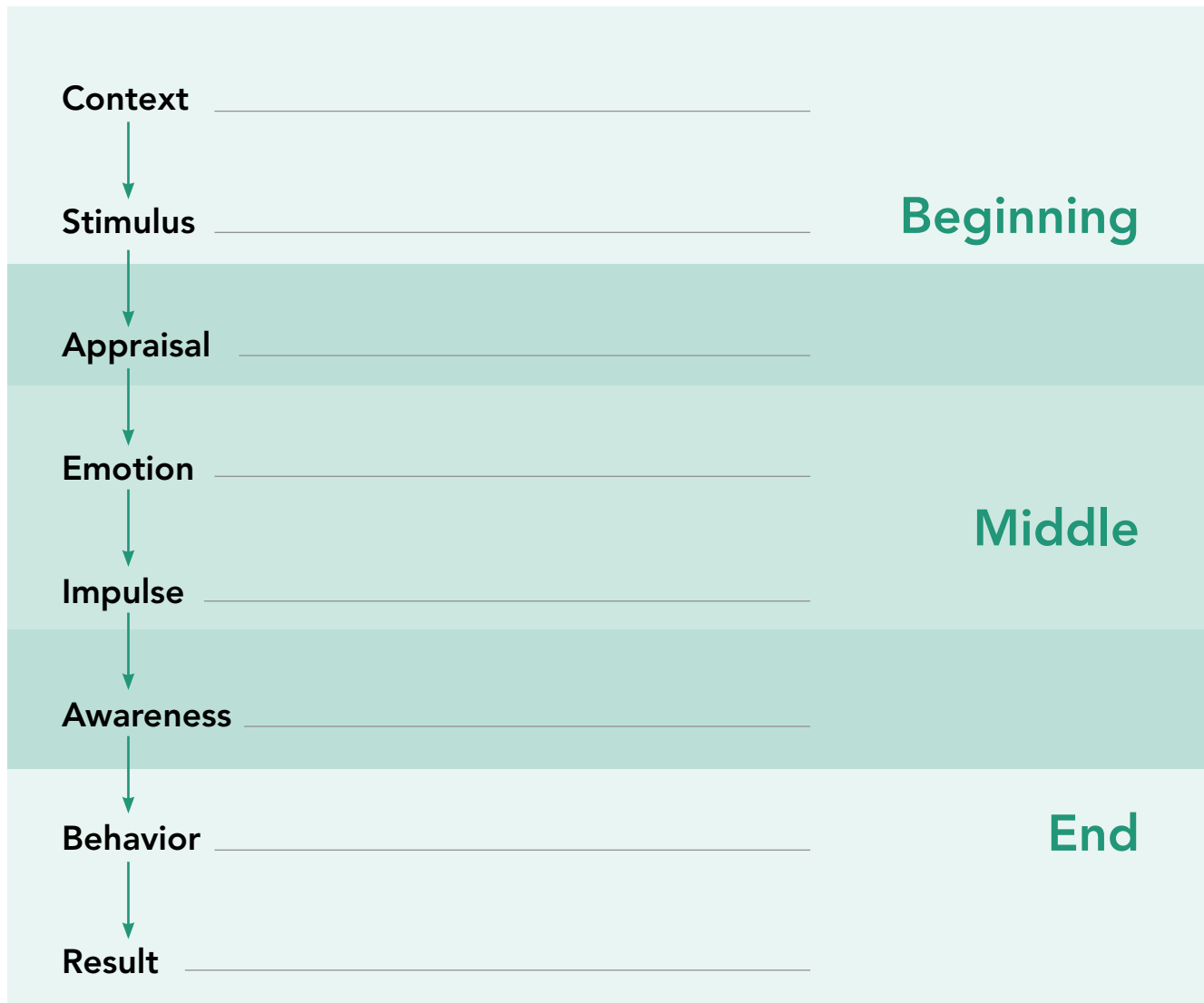
OPTIONAL INSIGHT ACTIVITY

If you have internet access, you can compare the timeline your students develop to the emotion timeline on the Atlas of Emotions website as a resource (www.atlasofemotions.org).

Ask your students:

- *“Is there anything in the Atlas of Emotions timeline that you like? Is there anything it includes that you did not include?”*
- *Is there anything about your own timelines that you like better than the Atlas? Is there anything missing from the Atlas that you included?”*

Emotion Timeline



List of Tools to Employ

Emotion Timeline Scenarios

1. On his 13th birthday, Desmond comes home after school. He's feeling a bit low because no one wished him happy birthday during the day at school. When he opens the door and walks into his house, suddenly his whole family and a lot of his friends shout "SURPRISE!" He looks around and sees they have planned a big party for him.

2. Imani sees a group of girls she doesn't know playing a game that looks interesting. "Can I join you?" she asks. "Of course!" they say, and invite her over.

3. During recess, a classmate with muddy shoes steps on Marianne's foot, dirtying her brand new shoes. Her family doesn't have much money, but her father had bought her these shoes just last week as a present.

4. Leonard loves his little sister Lisa very much. Lisa has been teased badly at school. One day, Leonard sees a kid the same age as his sister being teased during lunch and Leonard feels his chest tighten.

5. Kimball is very excited for a trip his family is going on to see relatives. A few days before they are supposed to leave, his parents tell him that the trip has been canceled and they aren't going, but they don't explain why.

6. Walking to school each day, Lewis passes a man asking for money for food. One day Lewis sees that the man has a crutch and a cast on his leg. Lewis feels tears come to his eyes. He brings his mother to the man and they give the man several sandwiches and water.

7. Michelle's parents have been arguing lately. This morning on her way out of the door, she heard her dad say he's going to work late tonight. She's never heard him say that before, so she is not sure what that means and she notices a chill go through her body.

8. Carlos's group of close friends are used to going to the movies every Friday night. This Friday, though, Carlos's mom says it's getting too expensive so he can't go with them. He has to stay at home, knowing his friends are at the movies.

Custom Scenarios

Custom Scenarios

Mapping Emotions

PURPOSE

This learning experience shows students that emotions can take place across a range of levels of activation and feeling tone in the body and mind (often called “core affect” in psychology). Using a two-dimensional chart that shows the level of activation (high energy vs. low energy) in the body on one axis, and a continuum of feeling from unpleasant to pleasant (called “valence” in psychology) on the other, students will learn that even a single emotion can exist

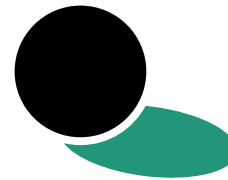
along a range, and that emotions may overlap in terms of how they feel or may differ dramatically or may even appear incompatible with each other. Mapping emotions this way creates a visual and conceptual tool that reinforces the direct examination of emotions and body states through meta-awareness and interoception. It also allows further exploration of how emotions relate to each other and in some cases oppose one another.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Describe how the “activation/feeling tone” chart works.
- Clarify where emotions can be labeled on the “activation/feeling tone” chart.
- Explore which emotional states may be more or less compatible with others.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Attention & Self-Awareness

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Printouts of the “activation/feeling tone chart” (one copy per student) and one set of “feeling cards” (provided at the end of this learning experience)
- Markers or pens for each student; the emotion families charts created earlier for display
- Rope, string, or colored tape to create the “activating / feeling tone chart” on the floor

LENGTH

40 minutes

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“Let’s prepare for a short attention practice. How do we want our body to be?”*
- *First we’ll take a comfortable and upright posture. Then we’ll keep our eyes on the ground or close them.*
- *Before we strengthen our attention, we’ll do some resourcing or grounding to calm our bodies. Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let’s just bring our resource to mind. And let’s see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we’re going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s become aware of our breathing. Let’s see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back*

to your resource or grounding, or just take a small break, making sure not to disturb anyone else. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]

- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *You can strengthen your attention by focusing on sensations or by focusing on the breath. It’s your choice - it’s always up to you.*
- *What did you notice?” [Share aloud.]*

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 10 minutes

The Activation/Feeling Tone Chart

Overview

In this interactive presentation, students will learn to use the activation/feeling tone chart as a tool for mapping emotions.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Emotions vary in terms of the level of activation in our body (high energy, neutral, or low).
- Emotions vary in terms of feeling tone (whether they feel pleasant, neutral, or unpleasant).
- By tracking our level of activation and sensations, we can learn about our emotional state.
- A single emotion can exist across different levels of activation and feeling tone.

Materials Required

- Rope, string, or colored tape
- A set of “feeling cards” (provided at the end of the learning experience)

Materials Required

- Create the chart on the floor with rope, string, colored tape, or some other material. The chart should have two intersecting axes (like the “activation/feeling tone chart” at the end of this learning experience) so that it looks like a giant plus sign (+). It should be large enough that multiple students can stand at various positions in the chart at the same time (2m x 2m or larger).
- Place the first five cards on the chart. (Lots of Energy at the top, Very Little Energy at the bottom, Very Unpleasant on the left, Very Pleasant on the Right, and Neutral in the middle where the two axes intersect).
- Ask for volunteers to stand where these first five cards are. These will be static positions for this activity.
- Tell students that this chart is a way to help us understand our emotions and how they feel in the body. An experience of an emotion can fit anywhere on the chart and every emotion can fit on the chart.
- Explain that the line going up and down is the “activation axis,” which shows how much activation there is in our body or how much energy we have when we feel that emotion. The line going left to right is “feeling tone,”

showing how pleasant or unpleasant we feel when we have that emotion.

- Explain that the remaining cards indicate emotions and feelings.
- Choose one of the four quadrants (upper right, lower right, upper left, or lower left) and ask for a volunteer to select a feeling card from the set that would fit that quadrant. Allow them to share why they chose that feeling for that quadrant. Then ask for another volunteer to stand in that quadrant, posing as that emotion.
- Repeat for the remaining three quadrants.
- Allow the students to relax from their poses. Ask the group if any of the emotions could be in any other quadrants or any other parts of the quadrant they are already in. Discuss.
- When the four quadrants are filled, you can clear the quadrants and do it again, or you can end the activity.

Teaching Tips

- If it better suits your group, you can present the information in this activity as a mini-lecture while drawing the chart on the board. Instead of asking volunteers to pose as emotions, you can ask students to offer a shape that could stand for the emotion on the chart.
- Alternatively, you could create a large chart of the quadrants and a stick figure of a person that is big enough that they could be in different quadrants at the same time.

Sample Script

- *"This is a way for us to understand our emotions and how they feel in the body. It's a chart. We can put an experience of an emotion anywhere on this chart.*
- *From up to down the chart shows how activated our bodies are or how much energy we have. This shows the level of energy. If we're really excited or agitated or super anxious, we may have a lot of energy in our bodies, so we'd be up at the top. If we're feeling really tired or low-energy, we'd be down at the bottom. The middle is neutral.*
- *From left to right the chart shows how unpleasant or pleasant the experience is for us. All the way on the left is really unpleasant. The middle is neutral. All the way on the right is really pleasant.*
- *Can I have four volunteers to stand at the ends of each line? And one to stand right in the middle, where it says neutral?*
- *We're each going to use this chart to map out some emotions. But first let's make sure we all understand the chart. Let's try to pick some emotion words together that might fit in each of the four areas of the chart.*
- *What emotion might fit in the upper right hand area, where our body is really activated and has lots of energy in it, and we're feeling pleasant? Here's our set of emotion and feeling cards. Can someone find a card that would fit in that area? [When someone has volunteered, ask:] Can you place the card where you would like in that area and then explain why you chose that card?*
- *Now I wonder if I can have a volunteer to stand there and pose as that emotion or feeling. [Ask the volunteer to strike a frozen pose of that emotion or feeling while standing in the appropriate part of the chart.]*
- *What emotion might fit in the upper left area, where our body is really activated but we're feeling really unpleasant? [Repeat the activity as above, asking for an explanation and then another volunteer to pose as the emotion in that area of the chart.]*
- *What about the bottom right (low activation, pleasant)? What about the bottom left (low activation, unpleasant)? [Repeat until the chart is filled in all four areas.]*
- *Now you can all relax your poses.*
- *Do you all think one emotion could be in more than one place on the chart?*
- *For example, could fear be a low level fear or a really anxious fear? Could it be slightly unpleasant or really unpleasant? How would we represent that?*
- *Or could happiness involve a lot of activation in our body or less activation? Could it be slightly pleasant or really pleasant? How would we represent that? It might not always just be in one place. [Invite one or more of the volunteers representing emotions to lie down to touch more than one quadrant.]*

- *Do you think we all experience an emotion the same way? Might one person experience it differently than another? Might we each experience the same emotion differently at different times?*
- *Next you're going to draw your own charts for your own emotions."*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 15 minutes

Mapping Emotions on the Activation/Feeling Tone Chart

Overview

In this activity, students will choose one emotion term from each emotions family chart and will map that emotion on their own personal activation/feeling tone chart.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Emotion families contain emotions that vary in terms of activation and feeling tone.
- Some emotions tend to be more or less compatible with each other than others.

Materials Required

For each student:

- A copy of a blank chart (provided at the end of the learning experience)
- Markers or pens

Instructions

- Tell students to select one emotion term from each emotions family chart. Tell them to draw it as a point or as a larger shape that shows the area that that emotion term might cover.

They want to make sure to illustrate the range of the emotion.

- They can also illustrate their charts with emojis or other art depictions.
- Allow enough time for each student to choose and map one emotion term from each of the emotion families you created earlier (i.e., they should have one from compassion, happiness, fear, anger, sadness, and jealousy)
- If some students finish before others, allow them to continue by mapping more emotion terms from the emotion families as they see fit.
- When all the students have mapped at least one term from each emotion family, invite them to share by holding up their activation/feeling tone chart and explaining why they placed the emotion terms where they did. Depending on how many are in your group, you may want to be clear on how much each should share, for time's sake.
- Ask your students to look at their activation/feeling tone charts and the emotion families charts and see if they can find any emotions that tend to oppose each other. That is, they seem to be opposite or not very compatible with each other. This means, "If I feel this one emotion, it is usually harder to feel this other emotion." (Typical examples might be happiness and sadness, anger and affection, love and hate, excitement and boredom. Note that even if two emotions tend to be opposed, that does not necessarily mean they are never experienced as happening together.)

- Have them add in emotion terms that tend to be opposing of the ones they charted and place them on the activation/feeling tone chart. Ask them to draw arrows between any two emotions that seem like they could be opposed to each other.
- After they have had a few minutes to do this, invite sharing again.

Teaching Tips

- It could be helpful for you to have completed an activation/feeling tone chart for yourself before facilitating this activity both for your own personal practice with the material and so you would have your sample to use as an example if necessary. You would then be able to participate in the share, which would be helpful both as a model and for community-building.
- Instead of copying the blank chart, students could draw the chart on their own paper.

Sample Script

- *"To begin your personal chart, select one emotion term from each emotions family. Draw it as a small or large shape depending on how much space on the chart it should take up. So, each person should aim to plot 6 terms.*
- [Allow enough time for each student to choose and map one emotion term from each of the emotion families you created earlier.]
- *Who would like to share one of the emotion terms they drew on their chart and how and*

why they placed it where they did? [Allow a few students to share.]

- *Some emotions tend to go together, like loneliness and sadness. Others tend to not go together, like happiness and sadness. We can call the ones that don't tend to go together "opposing emotions."*
- *Let's see if we can find any opposing emotions. For example, if you feel one emotion, it's usually harder to feel another emotion. You may have some opposing emotions on your chart already. Who already has some opposing emotions?* [Allow a few students to share.]
- *Let's add in opposing emotions to our charts for the emotions we've already put down. Draw arrows between any two emotions that seem like they could be opposed to each other.*
- *We might not be able to think of an opposing emotion for every emotion. That's okay. We might also come up with multiple opposing emotions for a single emotion!*
- *Let's share with each other now.*
- *What did you notice as you did this? What questions do you have?"*

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 7 minutes

Mapping with Grounding and Resourcing*

Overview

- Students will map their current state using the activation/feeling tone chart by tracking while engaging in a grounding/resourcing practice.

- They will then update the chart after a few minutes of grounding or resourcing, to see if any changes have taken place in their body or emotional state.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We can notice our own level of activation and feeling tone at any moment
- Noticing our level of activation and feeling tone gives us information about our emotional state
- Our emotional state is always in flux
- Grounding, resourcing, and other practices can affect our emotional state

Materials Required

A copy of a blank activation/feeling tone chart for each student and a writing utensil.

Instructions

- Give each student a blank activation/feeling tone chart and a writing utensil.
- Begin a resourcing/grounding practice.
- Ask students to draw where they are on their individual charts.
- Engage in resourcing and grounding for a few minutes more in silence.
- Ask them to update their charts based on what they are feeling now.
- Invite them to share if they are willing.

Teaching Tips

- Note that some students may report that their emotional state got worse or felt worse after the practice. If they are becoming aware of their emotions, they may still be benefiting from the practice. However, if a student repeatedly notes that they feel worse after a practice, then you can encourage them to choose a different form of practice (a different resource, a different form of grounding, or a different form of attention training). Also remind them that they can opt out of any practice that makes them uncomfortable.
- You are encouraged to repeat this activity a few times in other sessions.

Sample Script

- *“Let’s use the activation/feeling tone chart as a tool to see what happens when we practice our resiliency skills like grounding or resourcing.*
- *Let’s imagine one of our resources.*
- *If someone did something kind for your recently, or if you were kind to someone else, you can feel free to use that as your resource.*
- *If you’d rather do grounding, you can find a comfortable way to sit or something comfortable to hold or touch.*
- *As you think about your resource or engage in grounding, what do you feel on the inside? Let’s take a brief moment to quietly notice. [Pause for 30 seconds.]*

- Now let's draw on our chart what we are noticing in our body. Where would you draw yourself on the chart? You can also write or draw any sensations or emotions you are noticing and where they might be on the chart.
- Now let's now take a few moments to do grounding or resourcing in silence. [Pause for 30-60 seconds.]
- Now let's do tracking and pay attention to the sensations inside our bodies.
- If you find a pleasant or neutral sensation just pay attention to that and watch it. See if it changes or stays the same. [Pause 10-15 seconds.]
- If you haven't found a pleasant or neutral sensation, see if you can shift to another part of your body to find a place that feels better. [Pause 10-15 seconds.]
- Thank you. Now let's update our charts.
- Where would you draw yourself on the chart? You can also write or draw any sensations or emotions you feel right now and where they might be on the chart.
- Did anyone notice a change between the first time you did your chart and the second time? [Invite them to share.]
- Did anyone stay the same?"

DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- "What stood out for you when we charted our emotional state?
- What surprised you?
- What more did you learn about emotions?
- Are there any thoughts or questions you have about emotions?"

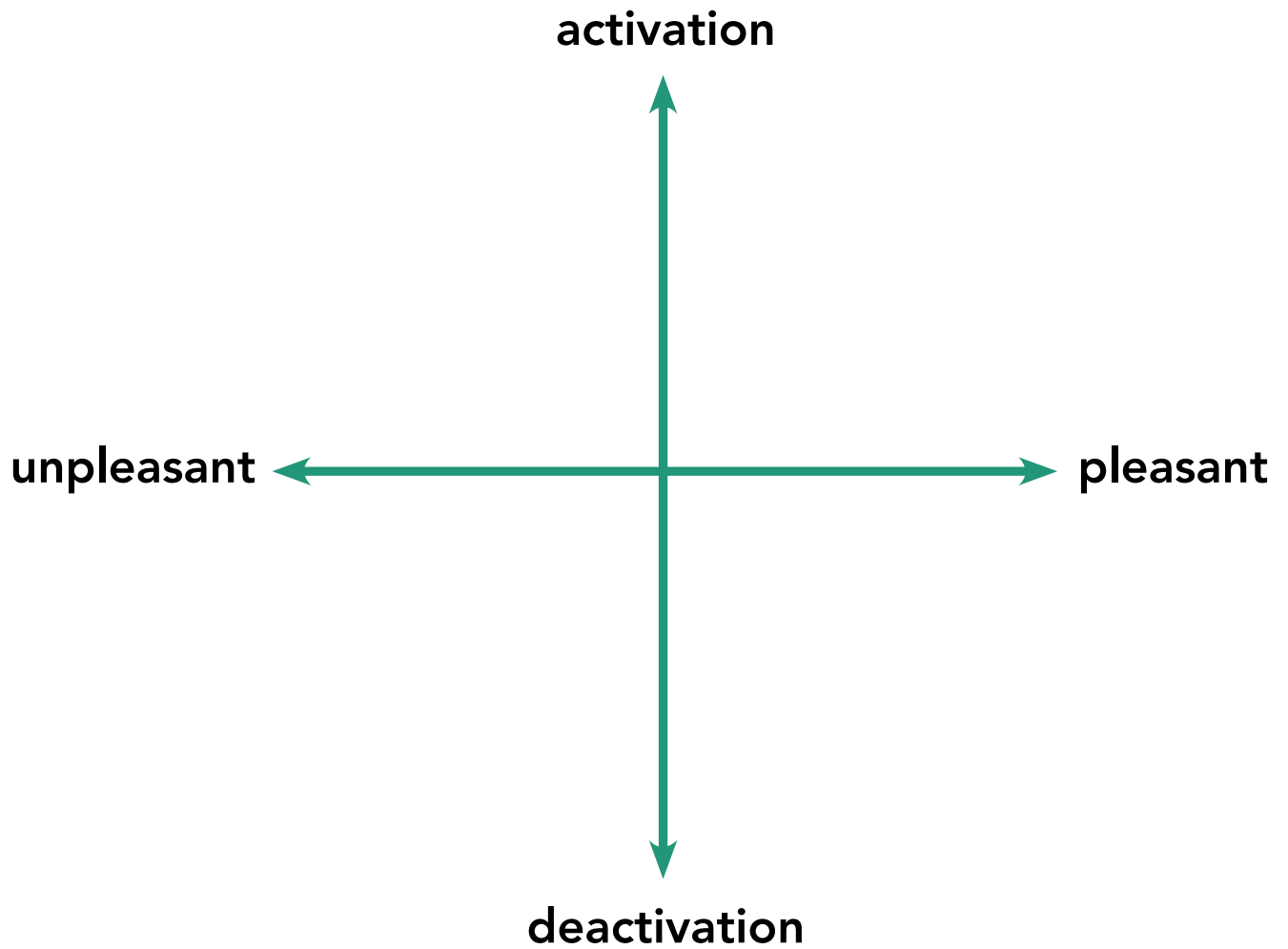
Activation/Feeling Tone Chart

Lots of Energy	Neutral
Very Little Energy	Very Pleasant
Very Unpleasant	

Feeling Cards for the Activation/Feeling Tone Chart

Happiness	Compassion	Anger
Joy	Positive Excitement	Unpleasant Surprise
Sadness	Positive Surprise	Feeling sleepy but happy
Loneliness	Jealousy	Feeling calm or peaceful
Being stuck in the low zone	Anxiety	Contentment
Being stuck in the high zone	Fear	Feeling relaxed
Being in the resilient zone	Feeling Timid	Feeling stressed

Activation/Feeling Tone Chart



Dealing with Difficult Emotions and Exercising Restraint

PURPOSE

The purpose of this learning experience is for students to learn to identify when emotions provoke behaviors that harm oneself or others, and to recognize which emotions are particularly difficult or “risky” for them for this reason, using the “feeling tone/activation” chart. Students will learn that while all emotions are natural, heedfulness and caution with regard to certain emotions can

be combined with strategies for navigating them. This is called emotional hygiene. The learning experience ends by introducing the idea of an “ethics of restraint” (meaning an ethical stance against causing unnecessary harm to others). Restraint comes not from suppressing emotions, but rather by learning to more skillfully navigate them.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Identify characteristics that can make certain emotions “risky.”
- Identify strategies for use with risky emotions.
- Explore the idea of an “ethics of restraint” (limiting behaviors that are harmful to self and others).

LENGTH

40 minutes

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Self-Regulation

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- The emotion families charts created earlier for display
- Students’ individual activation/feeling tone charts
- Copies of the “Strategies for Dealing with Risky Emotions ” for each student
- Copies (or one large copy) of the “Investigating Risky Emotions Worksheet”

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“Let’s prepare for a short attention practice. How do we want our body to be?”*
- *First we’ll take a comfortable and upright posture. Then we’ll keep our eyes on the ground or close them.*
- *Before we strengthen our attention, we’ll do some resourcing or grounding to calm our bodies. Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let’s just bring our resource to mind. And let’s see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we’re going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s become aware of our breathing. Let’s see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back to your resource or grounding, or just take*

a small break, making sure not to disturb anyone else. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]

- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *You can strengthen your attention by focusing on sensations or by focusing on the breath. It’s your choice - it’s always up to you.*
- *What did you notice?” [Share aloud.]*

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 10 minutes

Difficult or “Risky” Emotions

Overview

- This discussion introduces the concept of “risky” emotions: emotions that can cause problems for ourselves and others if they get out of hand.
- Students then come up with a list of risky emotions in pairs, using the “Investigating Risky Emotions Worksheet.”

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Some emotions are more risky than others, in that they can prompt behaviors that harm ourselves and others when they get out of hand.
- We can identify risky emotions by analyzing them according to their characteristics.
- Some risky emotions are commonly shared; others may be risky for one person but not another person.

- Risky emotions have implications that go beyond the individual.
- Once we identify risky emotions, we can be heedful (exercise caution) of them.

Materials Required

- The emotion families charts created earlier for display
- Students' individual activation/feeling tone charts
- A copy of the "Investigating Risky Emotions Checklist" for each pair of students (or write a large single copy on the board or a piece of chart paper for your whole class to see)

Instructions

- Ask students if there are emotions that cloud our minds the stronger they get and that can become risky if we are not careful.
- Take out the emotion families charts and ask them to take out their own core affect charts. Ask them to re-examine them, looking for which emotions might be risky.
- We can determine if an emotion is risky by investigating it critically by asking the following questions from the "Investigating Risky Emotions Worksheet" (This list is provided at the end of this learning experience, and you may wish to write it on the board or use it as a handout):
 - Could this emotion become a dangerous forest fire?

- Does this emotion tend to cause stress for myself or others?
- Could this emotion make me want to harm myself or others?
- What would happen if everyone [in our class, in our school] had a lot more of this emotion? Would it make things better?
- What if everyone had a lot less of this emotion?
- You may choose to ask students to pair-share with these questions before you facilitate a group discussion, or you can explore them all as a whole class from the start.
- Remind students about heedfulness. While all emotions are natural, risky emotions are those that we need to be heedful of or careful about. Heedfulness is one strategy that can be used to deal with risky emotions.

Teaching Tips

- Be attentive in case students feel that risky emotions are "bad" or that they need to fear or suppress them. There are many things in life that we need to be heedful of, and exercise restraint around, such as fire, electronics, or valuable and fragile objects. Restraint does not mean repression, but implies dealing with something constructively to prevent harm to self and others. The purpose of identifying risky emotions and strategies for dealing with them is for students to learn to navigate emotions constructively without having to suppress or repress them.

- The purpose of the “Investigating Risky Emotions Worksheet” is to get students to think for themselves about how to analyze thoughts and emotions in terms of the benefit or potential harm they can bring. Its purpose is not to provide a definitive tool for determining which emotions are risky or not. Your students may want to change the questions or add new questions to the checklist, which is to be encouraged.
- To add more movement to this learning experience, emotion families charts could be hung. There could be a check-in, followed by the idea of “risky” emotions, then students could be given a notecard and invited to walk past each chart, jotting down their response to the relative riskiness (for them) of the emotions in that family.

Sample Script

- *“Some emotions seem to cloud our minds the stronger they get. These emotions can be “risky” because if we are not careful, they can lead to behaviors that cause problems for ourselves and others. They can also increase our stress.*
- *If an emotion makes us want to harm ourselves or others, then we would call that a risky emotion. In other cases, the emotion might just not be appropriate or helpful for the situation.*
- *Often we can’t help the emotions from arising, but we can use our attention and awareness to notice the emotion and see if it’s a spark that could become a forest fire.*
- *Being risky doesn’t mean the emotion is bad, because all emotions are natural, and we all experience emotions.*
- *Being risky also doesn’t mean we have to suppress that emotion, because we can use strategies to transform it into something productive.*
- *Instead of suppressing it, if an emotion is risky, we want to just make sure it stays under control or that it stays within certain limits and doesn’t get out of hand. This is called “restraint.” [Write the word “restraint” on the board if you feel it would be helpful.]*
- *Let’s take out the emotion families charts and the core affect charts that we created earlier.*
- *Let’s see which of these emotions might be risky. We don’t all have to agree. Some emotions we might all agree are risky. But for some we might not. It’s important for us to decide for ourselves.*
- *The way we investigate is by asking questions about the emotion: (Write these questions on the board)*
 - *Could this emotion become a dangerous forest fire?*
 - *Does this emotion tend to cause stress for myself or others?*
 - *Could this emotion make me want to harm myself or others?*
 - *What would happen if everyone [in our class, in our school] had a lot more of this emotion? Would it make things better?*

- *What if everyone had a lot less of this emotion?*
- *Let's first discuss this in pairs and then we'll share with the whole class. With your partner, go through these questions and identify which emotions you both feel might be risky. [Ask students to talk to a partner first and then share out with the whole group.]*
- *Which emotions did you decide might be risky? Why? [Allow each pair to share.]*
- *Remember the concept of heedfulness? Do you think that is a strategy that can be used with risky emotions?*
- *Being heedful doesn't mean being scared, but it does mean being cautious and careful. It means paying attention to something that could be a problem if you're not careful. By being heedful, we save ourselves from trouble. And fortunately, heedfulness is something we can practice and get better at.*
- *We're all heedful of things. What are the benefits of being heedful of risky emotions?*
- *Heedfulness is just one strategy we can use. Now we're going to explore some other strategies we might use to deal with risky emotions."*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 15 minutes

Identifying Risky Emotions and Strategies for Dealing with Them

Overview

Students fill out a handout in groups of two or three to identify potentially risky emotions and possible strategies for dealing with each one.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We can come up with a number of possible strategies for navigating risky emotions.
- Some strategies are common for all or most risky emotions, some are particular to individual emotions.
- Navigating risky emotions allows us to practice an "ethic of restraint."

Materials Required

- Copies of the "Strategies for Dealing with Risky Emotions" handout, provided at end of learning experience
- Writing utensils for each student

Instructions

- Ask students to look at their personal core affect charts that they made in the previous learning experience.
- Ask them to look at the emotions they charted and identify those which are potentially risky, marking them with a star.
- Divide students into groups of 2 or 3. Together they will explore what strategies could be used to deal with these risky emotions.

- Each group will choose a risky emotion and then fill out the handout at the end for their risky emotion. If they finish before other groups, they can start with a new emotion.
- After each group has had a chance to fill out at least one of these handouts, stop all the groups and ask each group to share their results to the entire class.
- After each group has shared, ask a few summarizing questions.
- Were there any strategies that seemed common across the emotions we examined? Which strategies seemed specific to a particular emotion? Which strategies that we have discussed together may be helpful with dealing with risky emotions? (For example, resourcing, grounding, Help Now!, mindfulness, awareness, heedfulness, focusing on the breath, etc.)
- At the end of the activity, collect all the core affect charts and explain that you are going to make a chart of emotions based on all of them. This “master chart” will show all the emotions, which ones are usually opposed to each other, and which ones could be risky in certain situations.
- Conclude by introducing the idea of an “ethics of restraint.” This means deciding what is beneficial and harmful for ourselves and others (ethics) and choosing to limit what is harmful in our own behaviors (restraint). Ask your students: How does knowing risky emotions and having strategies to deal with

them allow us to practice “restraint” and keep the class agreements we made?

Sample Script

- *“Here’s a handout that I’m going to give to you in pairs.*
- *Each pair will choose one emotion that you feel could be risky.*
- *Discuss among yourselves and fill out the handout together. Then we’ll share. Feel free to ask me if you have any questions. [Allow time for each pair to discuss and fill out at least one handout. If one pair finishes early, they can start on a second emotion.]*
- *Now let’s share. Let’s have each pair share what emotion they worked on and what they decided about it. [Let each pair share.]*
- *Were there any strategies that seemed common across the emotions we examined? Which strategies seemed specific to a particular emotion?*
- *Do we need different strategies for dealing with emotions based on where they are on the core affect chart?*
- *Can we use opposing emotions to help us? How?*
- *I’m going to collect your core affect charts so I can make a class chart of emotions based on all of them. This chart will show all the emotions, which ones are usually opposed to each other, and which ones could be risky in certain situations.*

- If we know which emotions are risky for us and we know strategies for dealing with them, this allows us to practice “restraint.” Restraint means to set limits or to exercise control.
- If we choose to practice restraint with regard to hurting others or ourselves, we are setting a limit. We are saying “I’m going to be careful when it comes to emotions, feelings, or thoughts that could harm myself or others.”
- If we do this, we are also practicing an “ethics of restraint.” “Ethics” means the choices we make about what is right or wrong for ourselves and others, and what will be beneficial or harmful for ourselves and others. [If helpful, write the words “ethics of restraint” on the board or chart paper.] This is not an ethics of other people telling us what to do. It is about our own decisions and choices.
- All the practices we have been learning up to now to manage our nervous system, our attention, and our emotions are strategies that combine to help us practice this ethics of restraint.
- Let’s finish by looking at our class agreements again. Does identifying risky emotions and how to deal with them help us keep our class agreements?
- What about practicing an ethics of restraint—is that connected to our class agreements?
- Remember that all of us want kindness and compassion from others, not meanness. We don’t want others to hurt us. And reciprocity means that if we want that for ourselves, we

need to practice that towards others. This is the value of an ethics of restraint. We stop ourselves from harming, because we want a classroom and a community that is free from harm in general.”

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 7 minutes

Mapping with Attention Practice*

The reflective practice in the previous learning experience integrated mapping with tracking and interoception (attending to sensations and the internal state of the body) by using the resilient skills of grounding and resourcing. This reflective practice does the same, but integrates mapping with attention practice and meta-awareness (noticing thoughts and emotions).

As before, students will map their current state using the activation/feeling tone chart by tracking while engaging in a grounding/resourcing practice. They will then engage in a brief attention practice. They will then update the chart to see if any changes have taken place in their body or emotional state.

You are encouraged to repeat this activity a few times in other sessions.

Sample Script

- “Let’s use the activation/feeling tone chart as a tool to see what happens when we practice our attention and awareness skills.
- Let’s start by doing a brief moment of resourcing or grounding.

- *As you think about your resource or engage in grounding, what do you feel on the inside? Let's take a brief moment to quietly notice. [Pause for 30 seconds.]*
- *Now let's draw on our chart what we are noticing in our body. Where would you draw yourself on the chart? You can also write or draw any sensations or emotions you are noticing and where they might be on the chart.*
- *Let's now take a few moments to practice cultivating our attention.*
- *We can focus on our breath or we can just be aware of whatever arises in our mind without reacting to it.*
- *If you focus on your breath, you can count your breaths if you wish.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back to your resource or grounding, or just take a small break, making sure not to disturb anyone else.*
- *Let's practice. [Pause for 30-60 seconds.]*
- *Thank you. Now let's update our charts.*
- *Where would you draw yourself on the chart? You can also write or draw any sensations or emotions you feel right now and where they might be on the chart."*

Allow students to update their charts, and then invite them to share if they are willing to. Some

students' emotional states may have changed, while others may have stayed the same.

Again, note that some students may report that their emotional state got worse or felt worse after the practice. If they are becoming aware of their emotions, they may still be benefiting from the practice. However, if a student repeatedly notes that they feel worse after a practice, then you can encourage them to choose a different form of practice (a different resource, a different form of grounding, or a different form of attention training). Also remind them that they can opt out of any practice that makes them uncomfortable.

DEBRIEF | 4 minutes

- *"What was familiar about the work we did today?"*
- *What surprised you about our work today?*
- *Did we do or discuss something that you feel applies to your own life?*
- *Are there any thoughts or questions you have?"*

Investigating Risky Emotions Worksheet

- Could this spark of emotion (or feeling or thought) become a dangerous forest fire?

- Does this emotion (or feeling or thought) tend to cause stress for myself or others?

- Could this emotion (or feeling or thought) make me want to harm myself or others?

- What would happen if everyone [in our class or in our school] had a lot more of this emotion (or feeling or thought)?

- What if everyone had a lot less of this emotion (or feeling or thought)?

- What else comes to mind about this emotion (or feeling or thought)?

Name _____

Date _____

Strategies for Dealing with Risky Emotions

Name of emotion:

Level of Risk (*Low, Medium, High*):

Example of when someone might feel this emotion:

What needs might be connected with this emotion?

Does everyone experience this emotion?

Where this emotion might be on the Activation/Feeling Tone Chart:

What sensations are associated with this emotion?

What are opposing emotions (*if any*):

Strategies for dealing with this emotion:

Things we can do with our bodies:

Things we can do with our minds:

Things we can do with other people:

What can we do if we see another person having this emotion?

Is there anything in our class agreements related to this emotion?

MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 5

Learning About and From One Another

Overview

With this chapter, the SEE Learning curriculum turns from the Personal to the Social domain, with learning experiences that seek to help students turn their attention towards others. Many of the same skills that were cultivated in Chapters 1-4 for the Personal domain can be applied here also, but this time while focusing outward towards their classmates and those they encounter on a daily basis.

Changes in brain development mean that students in adolescence become increasingly oriented towards their peers, and gain much more developed capacities for perspective-taking and empathy. Far more than at any previous time in life, their identity comes to be formed relationally with peers, and not just with family members. Students at this age are ready to be taught specific skills and concepts to help them understand and navigate this tricky period of development. Adolescence is a perfect time for introducing the topics of empathy and perspective-taking, and the skill of mindful listening. Moreover, since adolescence is also a time of considerable stress for many students, exploring the ways in which they are like one another, and understanding their differences alongside shared commonalities, can help them feel less alone in their struggles. These are the topics of Chapter 5, which focuses on interpersonal awareness—becoming increasingly aware of the other people with whom one interacts.

The first learning experience, “Understanding Our Social Identity,” provides students with an opportunity to shift their attention toward others and become more aware of their social realities. It does this through two activities that explore what they know and don’t yet know about each other. This leads to reflecting on identity and the assumptions we make about one another. They also do an activity called “Who Are You?” that helps reveal the infinite aspects of our identities that can be explored, most of which are not visible to others upon first meeting us.

Learning Experience 2, “Mindful Dialogues,” introduces two practices: mindful listening and mindful dialogues. “Mindful listening” means to listen respectfully and empathically with full attention, without interrupting the other person, without being distracted, and without focusing on oneself or one’s judgments. It is a communication skill that connects with both parts of empathy: the attentive listening allows one to better understand the situation of the other and how they are feeling (cognitive empathy), while the act of respectful listening can help to create a resonance with the other person and show that one cares (affective empathy). This kind of listening builds on and reinforces students’ attentional skills because it requires focusing solely on what the other person is saying, rather than on what one wants to say in response. Mindful listening also provides an opportunity for students to be listened to, without judgment, by their classmates, thereby creating safety. Students are asked to consider the ways in which mindful listening affects the speaker and the listener, as well as how these practices might impact the classroom community.

A “mindful dialogue” is a type of paired reflective practice supported by mindful listening that you can use to explore a number of issues with your students. In it, each student poses a set of provided questions to their partner, and then listens mindfully, without comment or judgment. The mindful dialogue format allows each student to both reflect personally on what they are learning and how it applies to their own life, and also to briefly share their thinking with another student. Mindful dialogues can help students achieve critical insights and deepen their understanding while learning about and from each other.

In the Learning Experience 3, “Appreciating Diversity and Shared Commonalities,” students explore the ways in which we are different and alike. Through an insight activity, students can discover that although they are individually unique, being unique is also something they share in common with all other human beings. Through engaging in mindful dialogues about diversity and respect, students can deepen their understanding of the ways in which the experience of “difference” is a common human experience, as are many of the emotions and struggles that we go through. If explored deeply, this can help students feel more connected to others and less alone, which in turn can help them feel more safe and less stressed.

The final learning experience, “Exploring Empathy,” builds on the previous ones to fully develop the concept of empathy and its associated skills. Empathy has two main components: being able to take another’s perspective (cognitive empathy) and being able to feel an emotional resonance with them (affective empathy). Without perspective-taking we can misinterpret the motivations and actions of others. Through sharing the perspectives of characters in stories and listening to their peers, students can experience more deeply the complexity of one person’s perspective, and how it is itself an expression of that person’s needs, feelings, and prior experiences. Listening to and appreciating different perspectives can lead to greater humility and willingness to learn, better problem-solving, and more positive relationships.

Student Personal Practice

Developing a deeper understanding of oneself and others is an ongoing process. Through the application of skills previously introduced and worked on, such as attention and emotional awareness, students can expand their appreciation of themselves, their classmates and other people who share our planet. Specifically, the skills of mindful listening and mindful dialogues that introduced in this chapter can be reinforced throughout the week, especially when students have opportunities to talk with and listen to each other. This is a practice that students can apply readily in their daily life.

Teacher Personal Practice

While teaching this chapter, reflect on your own experience with mindful listening. Is this the kind of listening that you regularly engage in at work or home? If you think listening more mindfully with empathy could be beneficial, try to catch yourself in the act of less mindful listening, and see if you can adjust your behaviors. Make note of the impact on yourselves and others when you are able to listen mindfully and with empathy. If you are having difficulty listening to someone with mindfulness and empathy, see if reminding yourself of your shared common humanity helps: we all want to be happy and avoid suffering.

Additionally, see if you can find another adult willing to practice mindful dialogues with you. Use the provided questions or come up with a set of your own three questions. Make sure your partner understands the activity and is choosing to participate. Make it a safe experience by letting them know that if they do not want to answer the questions you have provided, they can answer a question they wish you had asked instead.

Parent/Caregiver Information Letter



Date: _____

Dear Parent or Caregiver,

This letter is to inform you that your child is now starting **SEE Learning, Chapter 5, "Learning About and From One Another."**

In Chapter 5, your child will explore differences, similarities, and their own uniqueness, as well as the things that we all have in common as human beings (such as feelings, needs, and the desire to be happy). Identifying shared commonalities puts difference in perspective and supports the ongoing development of empathy. Your child will also learn and practice mindful listening behaviors, which can help them attune their attention to a speaker and listen without interruptions or judgments.

Home Practice

As your child goes through this chapter, you might like to ask your child to share with you their mindful listening strategies. See if you can practice listening mindfully to your child (with full attention, non-judgment, no interruptions, and empathy). Your example will be encouraging and demonstrates emotional attunement. Emotional attunement is an important aspect of empathy, which involves understanding and caring about how someone else feels. Your child is learning to look for clues, such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language, to help them identify another person's feelings. You can help your child improve their empathy skills by asking them questions about how they think another person feels, and noticing clues together.

Earlier chapters included

- Chapter 1 explored the concepts of kindness and happiness through helping to form class agreements.
- Chapter 2 explored the important role that our bodies, and in particular our nervous system, play in our happiness and well-being.
- Chapter 3 addressed the topic of attention, including why it is important, how to strengthen it, and how we can use it to cultivate insight into ourselves.
- Chapter 4 explored the topic of emotion and emotional hygiene, how emotions arise, and how to better "navigate them."

Further Reading and Resources

Remember that the SEE Learning Framework, contained within the *SEE Learning Companion*, contains an explanation of the entire curriculum. You may access it on the web at: www.compassion.emory.edu.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

Teacher/Educator Signature

Teacher/Educator Printed Name: _____

Teacher/Educator Contact Info: _____



Center for
Contemplative Science and
Compassion-Based Ethics

EMORY UNIVERSITY

Exploring Our Social Identity

PURPOSE

This learning experience provides students with an opportunity to shift their attention toward others and become more aware of their social realities. It does this through two

activities that explore what they know and don't yet know about each other. These lead to reflecting on identity and the assumptions we make about one another.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Explore their assumptions about others and how those assumptions can be incorrect.
- Recognize that there are many things we don't know about one another until we take the time to find out.
- Explore how every person, including themselves, has a vast number of identities, most of which are not visible upon first seeing or meeting a person.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Interpersonal Awareness

LENGTH

35 minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Writing utensil
- Notecards or paper
- A chime (optional)

CHECK-IN | 5 minutes

- *“Let’s do a short attention practice. How do we want our body to be?”*
- *First we’ll take a comfortable and upright posture. I’ll be keeping my eyes open, but you can close yours or look at the ground.*
- *Now choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can think of a new resource if you like: something that makes you feel better, safer, happier.*
- *Let’s bring our resource to mind and focus on it for a few moments quietly. You can also do grounding if you prefer. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that. If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a place in your body that feels better. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s become aware of our breathing. Let’s see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back to your resource or grounding. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]*
- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *Now let’s end the practice and open our eyes. What did you notice?” [Share aloud.]*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 15 minutes

Two Facts and a Fiction

Overview

In this insight activity, students share two things about themselves that are true, and one that is not true.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We can learn about one another and from one another.
- There are many things we don’t know about one another until we take the time to find out.
- Often our assumptions about others are incorrect or incomplete.

Materials Required

- Writing utensils
- Paper or note cards

Instructions

- Take a poll: ask students how well they think they know others in the group.
- Tell students you are going to play a game called Two Facts and a Fiction. The challenge is to see if others can figure out which items are true and which are false.
- Make sure they understand what is meant by “fact” (something that is true) and “fiction” (something that is false).
- Write the words “Something someone might not know about me is…” on the board or a piece of chart paper.

- Tell students to write two true things (facts) and one false thing (fiction) about themselves on a note card or piece of paper. They should be written as statements, like “I am a vegetarian.” Tell them to put them in a random order and to select items that are not visible or obvious to someone just from looking at you. You, the educator, should participate also by filling out three things about yourself.
- Have each person share their three items, one at a time. After each student shares, the rest of the class can discuss which statements they think are true and which one is false:
 - *“Which two do you think are true and which is false? Why do you think that? What are you basing your guess on?”*
- After one or two classmates have guessed, allow the student to reveal which were the facts and which was the fiction.
- Once all students have taken their turn, debrief the activity, asking one or more of the following questions:
 - *“What was that activity like for you? What surprised you?”*
 - *Let’s talk about assumptions. How might this activity relate to the assumptions we make about each other?*
 - *What happens when we make assumptions based on our first impression of someone?*
 - *What happens when we get to know each other better?*

- *What are some other ways we might get to know each other better?”*

Teaching Tips

- Students may know this activity as the game “Two Truths and a Lie” and may have already played it before. That is fine, since there are endless facts and fictions that can be used in this game.
- You may have students read each other’s facts and fictions to add some variety. If you do this, you’ll want students to put their names on their cards.
- To save time, you can also demonstrate the activity once with a volunteer and then have students do the activity in pairs or quads. Have them switch partners between rounds, and do the activity for 2-3 rounds, followed by the group debrief.

Sample script

- *“We’re going to do an activity called “Two Facts and a Fiction.” This is a game that some of you may have already played before. It’s for learning about each other.*
- *How much do you think we know already about each other? Do you think there are a lot of things we don’t know about each other?*
- *In this game we write down two things that are true about ourselves, facts, and one thing that is not true, a fictional statement. Then the rest of the class will guess which things are true and which one is not true.*

- *Now, we don't want it to be super easy. We want to think of things that are less obvious. Things that other people might not know about us. Things that are parts of our identity but are not visible from the outside.*
- (Point to the board or poster with the prompt on it...) *"Something someone might not know about me is..."*
- *Each of us will write three things that answer this question: two that are true and one that's false, but in mixed up order. Then we will share and other people will have to guess which ones are true and which is false. And after they have guessed, we will reveal which ones were true and which is false.*
- *Do you have questions about how to play this game?*
- *Let's take a few minutes to write down our three statements now. [Give them a few minutes.]*
- *Now who would like to share first? What three things did you write? [Have a student share their three statements.]*
- *What do the rest of you think? Which ones are true and which is false?*
- *Now let's find out if we are right. Which ones were true and which was false? [Let the student reveal.]*
- *Okay let's hear from the next person. [Continue through all students until everyone has had their turn.]*

- [Then debrief, asking one or more of the following questions as time allows:]
 - *What was that activity like for you? What surprised you?*
 - *What did you learn about the people in our group?*
 - *Let's talk about assumptions. How might this activity relate to the assumptions we make about each other?*
 - *What can happen when we make assumptions based on our first impression of someone?*
 - *What happens when we get to know each other better?*
 - *Can you think of other ways we might get to know each other better?"*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 12 minutes

Who are you?*

Overview

In this insight activity students will explore the multiplicity of their own identities and learn about others' identities.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Every person has many aspects to their identity, most of which are not visible upon first seeing or meeting them.
- There are many things we don't know about one another until we take the time to find out.

Materials Required

- A way of keeping time (such as watch, timer or clock).
- A chime or some device that can make a sound loud enough for the class to hear when everyone is talking.

Instructions

- Tell students you will all be playing a game that involves learning about others and about ourselves. Tell them that you'll all be sharing what you learn about each other during the debrief, so keep that in mind as they share with your partners.
- Organize students so everyone is standing and has a partner. You should participate if there is an odd number of students.
- Explain the rules of the game. Students will take turns asking each other one question "Who are you?" for 30 seconds.
 - Partner 1 says "Who are you?" and listens to the answer from Partner 2. Then Partner 1 says, "Thank you. Who are you?" asking the question again. Partner 2 responds with a different answer. Partner 1 again says "Thank you. Who are you?" This is repeated until 30 seconds pass whereupon they will switch roles. The challenge is for the responding partner to never repeat the same response.
- Either model the activity first, playing the part of the respondent, or provide a few examples of how someone might answer the "Who are you?" question, including both trivial

responses and more revealing ones, to show that students can answer in a variety of ways. (I am a person who likes the color blue. I'm scared of heights. I'm proud of my Italian heritage.)

- Ask students to face their partners and choose who will go first as the questioner. Tell them that when you ring the chime, Partner 1 should begin asking "Who are you?" and repeat it, beginning with "Thank you," as many times as possible until time is called.
- Let them do this for 30 seconds, then ring the chime when time is up. Have them switch roles.
- After another 30 seconds, ring the chime again. Explain that they should now find a new partner. Remind them that the challenge is to never repeat an answer, even with new partners.
- Repeat the activity with new partners. Do this for three rounds, as time permits. After the rounds are complete, invite them to return to their seats and debrief with some or all of the following questions:
 - *"What was this activity like for you? [Be prepared to receive comments from those who did and did not find this a comfortable experience. Anticipate that it may be challenging for people who identify as introverted; who find it stressful to reach out to make partnerships; who don't like having their interaction interrupted or who don't prefer structured protocols. That's*

okay. You are asking this question to surface whatever comes up for participants, not as a judgment of the value of the activity. Notice, nod, “Thank you for your idea.”]

- *Who learned something you didn’t know about someone else? Did anything surprising happen?*
- *Was it hard to keep going? Why?*
- *What are some things you think this game shows about our identities?*
- *What did you notice about how many identities or aspects of our identity we have?*
- *How many of our identities do people see when they first see or meet us? What about when we see others? What are some differences between what others might think they can tell about us when they first see us, and our actual identities?*
- *What difference did it make that we said “Thank you” in between asking “Who are you?” How did that affect you as the question asker? As the person answering “Who are you?”*
- *What might we learn if we continued with this activity at other times?”*

Teaching Tips

- It can be beneficial to briefly model the activity in front of the group with your co-teacher or a student volunteer so that they can learn the protocol of saying “Who are you? Thank you. Who are you?”

- This activity can be repeated at different times in the school year.
- If you do not have a chime, you can use the technique of raising your hand up high and explaining that anytime anyone sees you or someone else raise their hand, they should stop talking and raise their own hand. In this way, eventually everyone in the class sees the upraised hands and stops talking.

Sample script

- *“Now we’re going to play a game that helps us learn about each other and ourselves. It’s called “Who are you?”*
- *After I explain the directions, we’ll all stand and find a partner. Partner 1 will be the questioner. The questioner will ask “Who are you?” to their partner. Partner 2 will then answer by saying something about themselves.*
- *When they’re done. Partner 1 will say “Thank you. Who are you?”*
- *Partner 2 gets to answer again, but this time giving a different answer. We can’t repeat something we’ve already said.*
- *Then Partner 1 says again, “Thank you. Who are you?” Partner 1 doesn’t comment on the responses or make additional conversation. They are in the listening role only.*
- *You’ll do this for 30 seconds until I ring the chime. Then you’ll switch roles, and the person who was asking the question, “Who are you?” will get to be the one who answers.*

- Remember to say “Thank you” each time, before asking “Who are you?” again.
- Let’s practice by you all together asking me “Who are you?” and I’ll respond. Ask me “Who are you?” [Have them all ask you this question as a class, then respond by saying something about yourself.]
- Now say, “Thank you. Who are you?” [Have them ask you, and reply again.]
- That’s it. Sounds good!. Any questions?
- I’ll ring the chime now to begin. When I ring the chime again, you’ll switch roles. [Ring chime to begin. Wait 30 seconds. Ring chime to switch roles. Wait 30 seconds. Ring chime to end the round.]
- Now please find a new partner and we’ll do round two. Remember we can’t repeat anything we’ve said earlier. Start when I ring the chime. [Ring chime as before. Continue to do the third round.]
- Okay that was the final round. Now let’s take our seats and debrief.
- [Debrief with some or all of the following questions:]
 - Who learned something you didn’t know about someone else? Did anything surprising happen?
 - Was it hard to keep going? Why?
 - What are some things you think this game shows about our identities?
- What did you notice about how many identities or aspects of our identity we have?
- How many of our identities do people see when they first see or meet us? What about when we see others? What are some differences between what others might think they can tell about us when they first see us, and our actual identities?
- What difference did it make that we said “Thank you” in between asking “Who are you?” How did that affect you as the question asker? As the person answering “Who are you?”
- What might we learn if we continued with this activity at other times?”

DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- “What have you learned about identity that you’d like to remember?
- What are some of the reasons it’s valuable for us to learn about each other’s identities?
- What benefits might there be if we all paid more attention to each other and learned more about each other in a non-judgmental way?”

Mindful Dialogues

PURPOSE

This learning experience introduces “mindful listening” and “mindful dialogues.” “Mindful listening” means to listen respectfully and empathically with full attention, without interrupting the other person, without being distracted, and without focusing on oneself, one’s judgments, and what one wants to say. “Mindful dialogues” use this technique of mindful listening to support a

dialogue between two students around sets of questions. The mindful dialogues format allows each student to both reflect personally on what they are learning and how it applies to their own life, and also to briefly share their thinking with another student. Mindful dialogues can help students achieve critical insights and deepen their understanding while learning about and from each other.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Practice the skill of listening mindfully without interrupting or shifting the focus to oneself.
- Practice using the mindful dialogue format.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Two pieces of chart paper for notes on mindful listening, each with two columns:
 - “Not Being Listened to Feels Like...” and “Being Truly Listened to Feels Like...”
 - “Mindful listening is...” and “In a Community Where People Truly Listen to Each Other...”
- Pieces of chart paper with the mindful dialogue questions written on them
- Markers
- A practiced attention signal such as a chime

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



**Attention and
Self-Awareness**

LENGTH

35 minutes

CHECK-IN | 5 minutes

- *“Let’s do a short attention practice. How do we want our body to be?”*
- *First we’ll take a comfortable and upright posture. I’ll be keeping my eyes open, but you can close yours or look at the ground.*
- *Now choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can think of a new resource if you like: something that makes you feel better, safer, happier.*
- *Let’s bring our resource to mind and focus on it for a few moments quietly. You can also do grounding if you prefer. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that. If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a place in your body that feels better. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s become aware of our breathing. Let’s see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back to your resource or grounding. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]*
- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *Now let’s end the practice and open our eyes. What did you notice?” [Share aloud.]*

PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION | 10 minutes

Mindful Listening*

Overview

In this activity students will discuss what they think would be involved in “mindful listening.”

Content/Insights to be Explored

- There is a difference between listening without much attention and mindful listening.
- This difference can affect us as speakers, listeners, and as a whole community.

Materials Required

- Chart paper
- Markers
- Chime

Instructions

- Explain that today you will talk about what it means to really listen to someone.
- Ask for examples of what it feels like when someone isn’t really listening to you when you really wish they were. Write student suggestions on a piece of chart paper under the heading “Not Being Listened To Feels Like...”
- Ask for student ideas of what it is like when you are really listened to with full attention and without judgment. Write their ideas on a piece of chart paper under the heading “Being Truly Listened To Feels Like...”
- Take a moment to note with them the differences between the two lists.

- Ask what it would look like, sound like and feel like for us to listen to someone else with full attention. Explain that you will call that “Mindful Listening” in class. Write their ideas down under the heading “Mindful Listening is...”
- Ask what it would be like if the whole class or community were good at doing mindful listening. Write their ideas under the heading “In a Community Where People Truly Listen to Each Other...”
- Explain that you will now do an activity that involves mindfully listening to each other.
- *We’re always talking to people and people are always talking to us. But have you ever felt that you were talking to someone but they weren’t really listening? What does that feel like?* [Ask for student ideas and write them on a piece of chart paper under the heading “Not Being Listened To Feels Like...”]
- *What is it like when someone truly listens to what you have to say fully, without judging you or correcting you or criticizing you? Is there someone in your life who listens to you that way? [Pause.] What is that experience like?* [Ask for student ideas and write them on a piece of chart paper under the heading “Being Listened To Feels Like...”]

Teaching Tips

- In SEE Learning, mindful listening means to listen attentively without interrupting, without being distracted, without giving advice, and without turning the conversation towards ourselves. Often when listening to others, we are only partially paying attention to the other person and what they are saying; part of our attention is on our own reactions, our thoughts, and what we are going to say once the other person finishes or gives us a chance to speak. Mindful listening involves noticing all of that, and then intentionally setting it aside, turning with full attention and without judgment to what the other person is saying. Just like compassion, mindful listening is other-focused, rather than self-focused.
- *Let’s look at these two lists we made. What are the main differences we notice?*
- *What about our own behavior when someone is talking to us? What does it mean to listen to someone with our full attention? What would that look, sound, and feel like? We’ve already learned about mindfulness so we’re going to call this “mindful listening.”* [Ask for student ideas and write them on a piece of chart paper under the heading “Mindful Listening Is...”]
- *What about if we expand our thinking to not just two people, but a whole community, like our classroom or our school. If we as a school community knew how to listen to each other with full attention, and if we practiced that until we got good at it, and it happened all of the time, how would that impact our school community? What might be different?* [Ask

Sample Script

- *“Today we’re going to investigate what it means to truly listen to someone.*

for student ideas and write them under the heading “In a Community Where People Really Listen to Each Other...”]

- *Just like we can strengthen our attention like a muscle, we can also strengthen our ability to listen mindfully. Today we’re going to learn a practice that involves us listening to each other with full attention and without judgment. It’s called having a “Mindful Dialogue.”*

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 17 minutes

Mindful Dialogues*

Overview

In this reflective practice students form pairs and use guiding questions to engage in personal reflection and to experience listening and speaking mindfully.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We can learn to listen mindfully with full attention, withholding judgment.
- We can learn a great deal about each other in a short amount of time if we listen mindfully.
- Being listened to mindfully can make us feel “heard” and “seen” and can strengthen relationships.
- Being able to express our thoughts and feelings to someone who is listening mindfully can help us reflect more deeply and gain insight.

Materials Required

None

Instructions

- Explain the format of the mindful dialogue.
 - a. A mindful dialogue involves the class dividing into pairs. Each pair decides who will go first. That person will be the questioner and will also be the person who will first practice mindful listening. The other student in the pair is the responder. The questioner asks a set of questions, which you can put on the board or on a piece of chart paper where everyone can see them. The responder answers each question one by one, taking as much of the allotted time as they like. The questioner listens mindfully while the respondent speaks; the questioner doesn’t speak except for asking the questions. Once the responder has finished, the questioner thanks the responder and moves on to ask the next question.
 - b. Explain in advance that it’s okay if the questioner has not had time to ask all three questions by the time the chime sounds. Alternatively, if the responder has finished early, the pair can just sit quietly in silence until they hear the chime. Encourage the questioner to notice if they find it difficult to not speak, remind them that their goal is to focus on what their partner is expressing, and that they’ll have an opportunity to speak when the time comes to switch.
 - c. Before one actually begins a mindful dialogue, it’s important that people

have time to read and think about the questions they will be answering.

d. Mindful dialogues are confidential.

Whatever you hear should not be shared with the class. Also, if you are asked a question and you don't want to respond to it, you can respond to a question you wish had been asked instead.

- Model a mindful dialogue with one of your students as a volunteer. Have the questions for this mindful dialogue visible for all to see on a piece of chart paper. Give everyone a few moments to read and think about the questions. Then begin the mindful dialogue using these questions:
 1. Please tell me about one of your personal resources.
 2. Thank you. What sensations do you notice when you think about your resource?
 3. Thank you. What else would you like to share about your resource or how you're feeling?
- To model the mindful dialogue, have a student ask you the same questions and answer them in front of the class, modeling appropriate disclosure. When you and your student partner have both taken your turns in front of the class and completed modeling the mindful dialogue, ask the observing students what they noticed about your dialogue.
- Next have the students practice with each other by dividing the class into pairs and having them stand or sit side-by-side such that everyone can see the mindful dialogue

questions, turning to face each other when they begin. Explain that they will wait until they hear the chime to begin. When they hear the chime again, it will mean to stop and switch, with the responder becoming the questioner. When they hear the chime again, it means to stop.

- Explain that mindful dialogues are meant to be safe, so if they don't want to answer a particular question, they can answer a question they wish the other person had asked instead, or stay in comfortable silence together.
- Ring the chime to have them begin. Pay attention to the time and allow them to engage in the activity for 60 to 90 seconds, depending on how you perceive the group's comfort level and engagement to be. After that time has elapsed, ring the chime and ask them to switch. Remind them that it's okay if they didn't finish all the questions. Also reinforce the skills being built, reminding everyone what it means to mindfully listen. Give them the same amount of time as the first round to complete the activity after they have switched, then ring the chime to signal the end of the mindful dialogue. If you like and have time, repeat the whole activity a second time with new partners. Note that the 60 to 90 seconds are for all three questions and it's okay if they do not complete all the questions in time. This way an entire round of a mindful dialogue lasts only 3 minutes or so, with each person being responder and questioner for one set of three questions.

- Conclude by asking what students experienced from doing the mindful dialogues.
 - a. *“What did you notice as you were the listener? What did you notice as you were the speaker?”*
 - b. *When during the day do you feel you are listening to someone mindfully?*
 - c. *When do you feel someone else is listening to you mindfully?*
 - d. *What sensations on the inside did anyone notice when they were listening or being listened to?*
 - e. *How or why might being listened to make our bodies feel safer and more in the resilient zone?”*

Teaching Tips

- It is often helpful to precede the actual mindful dialogue with a moment of reflection or an activity, (such as drawing) on the given topic of the dialogue. This provides think time for students prior to the actual dialogue and can make the sharing richer. For example, prior to doing a mindful dialogue on students’ resources, you might have them draw or think about a resource they already have identified as valuable, or a new resource. Prior to having them do a mindful dialogue on kindness, you might have them spend a minute thinking of a moment of kindness they saw recently.
- Mindful dialogues, as done in SEE Learning, are brief yet concentrated. Each round should only last 2-3 minutes. You can use this mindful dialogue technique to explore a range of questions, but since mindful

dialogues can be personal and intense, always be sure to remind students that if they feel uncomfortable answering a question, they can instead answer a question they wish had been asked, or stay together in comfortable silence. Mindful dialogues can be great ways to prompt reflection and the personalization of knowledge in students.

- If you are unfamiliar with this type of practice, it can be helpful to practice it with another adult first, outside of class, to see how it feels and how the timing works. Although it may take one or two tries for your students to get used to the format of a mindful dialogue done in this way, it will create an effective practice that you can continue to use to reflect on other materials as the SEE Learning curriculum progresses.

Sample Script

- *“Now that we know what mindful listening is, we can practice it. We’re going to practice listening in a mindful dialogue. A dialogue means two or more people are taking turns speaking to one another using mindful listening.*
- *Can I have a volunteer to practice with? We’ll model this mindful dialogue process for the class, using these same questions that everyone will use when we connect in partnerships.*
- *[Student’s name] and I are going to demonstrate how to do a mindful dialogue. Here are three questions. I’ll be the questioner*

and you will be the one who answers. Then we'll switch. So I'm going to ask you them first, one by one. Then when we switch, you can ask me.

- When I ask you, I'm going to listen mindfully to your responses, and not interrupt. Then when it's your turn to ask me, you'll do the same. Everyone else, please watch; you'll have an opportunity to do this next.
- Let's first take a moment to read the questions in silence.
- Okay let's start now. [Name], please tell me about one of your personal resources. [Listen and model mindful listening while the student shares, nodding and paying full attention but not interrupting.]
- Thank you. What sensations do you notice on the inside when you think about your resource? [Listen mindfully.]
- Thank you. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your resource or how you're feeling? [Listen mindfully. When the student has finished, ring the chime.]
- The chime means we're going to switch. Now you ask me the same three questions one by one. When I'm sharing, you'll be doing mindful listening. When I finish each response, you say "Thank you" and then you ask me the next question. Okay? [Engage fully.]
- What did you all notice about the mindful dialogue?
- What did you notice about our mindful listening?
- How do you think mindful listening is a way of being kind to someone? What contributes to that?
- How might mindful listening affect our sense of safety or our nervous system?
- What if I hadn't want to answer a question. Let's say I felt uncomfortable about answering one of the questions. What could I have done? [Allow for suggestions, or provide a model by demonstrating this with your partner.]
- Because mindful dialogues are designed to be safe, if I don't want to answer a question, then I can answer a question I wish the other person had asked. I can say, "I wish you had asked me about something else, so I'm going to share that instead." And then you can share. So in that way too, we can see that mindful dialogues are all about practicing kindness and respect in the way we talk to and listen to each other.
- Let's all practice this mindful dialogue now. As you find a partner to stand with, make sure you can see the questions here on the chart paper.
- Decide which of you will go first. The person who goes first will be the questioner. Raise your hand if you're going to be the questioner. Remember both of you will get to be the questioner—this hands up shows who will ask first. If you're the questioner, you're going

to ask these questions and practice mindful listening while the other person shares.

- *When I ring the chime you will begin. The questioner will ask the first question and then will mindfully listen. When the person answering is done, the questioner will say "Thank you," and will then ask the next question.*
- *The next time you hear the chime, it'll be time to switch. Don't worry if you're not done with all the questions yet. That's okay. Everyone will be answering at their own pace. Any questions?*
- *Turn and face each other. Let's begin!*
[Ring the chime.]
- [When the round is finished and both people have had the chance to share and listen mindfully, debrief the activity with one or more of the following questions:]
 - *What did you notice as you were the listener? What did you notice as you were the speaker?*
 - *When during the day do you feel you are listening to someone mindfully?*
 - *When do you feel someone else is listening to you mindfully?*
 - *What sensations on the inside did anyone notice when they were listening or being listened to?*
 - *How or why might being listened to make our bodies feel safer and more in the resilient zone?"*

DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- *"What did you learn today that you'd like to remember?"*
- *When could you practice mindful listening between now and our next time together? Who would you practice with?"*

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

As time allows, repeat this practice with new mindful dialogue questions, such as those suggested below. You may also choose to create your own mindful dialogue questions to facilitate learning and reflection. Each of the following sets of questions reinforces learning that has been introduced in this and previous chapters.

Happiness and Compassion (Chapter 1)

1. Tell me about a time when someone was kind or compassionate to you or did something nice for you.
2. How did it make you feel?
3. What is one way you could be more compassionate to others?

Resourcing and Grounding (Chapter 2)

1. Tell me about a time when you used resourcing or grounding to get back into your resilient zone.
2. How do you think that helped you?
3. When do you find resourcing or grounding most helpful?

Attention (Chapter 3)

1. Tell me about something you do that goes better when you give it your full attention.
2. How does it feel when you are doing that and really paying attention?
3. What is one thing you'd like to be able to pay attention to better and why?

Appreciating Diversity & Commonalities

PURPOSE

This learning experience invites students to explore diversity and commonalities. Through an insight activity, students discover that although they are individually unique, being unique is also something they share in common with all other human beings. Through engaging in mindful dialogues

about diversity and respect, students can deepen their understanding of the ways in which the experience of “difference” is a common human experience. Appreciating diversity as part of humanity can help students accept their own and others’ uniqueness.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Explore things we all have in common as human beings.
- Recognize things we think might be common or true for all people might not actually be.
- Recognize that one thing we share is that we are each unique.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Interpersonal Awareness

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Markers
- Post-it notes
- Paper
- Large chart paper or areas on the whiteboard labeled “Things We Have in Common” and “Each of Us Is Unique”

LENGTH

35 minutes

CHECK-IN | 5 minutes

- *“Let’s do a short attention practice. How do we want our body to be?”*
- *First we’ll take a comfortable and upright posture. I’ll be keeping my eyes open, but you can close yours or look at the ground.*
- *Now choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can think of a new resource if you like: something that makes you feel better, safer, happier.*
- *Let’s bring our resource to mind and focus on it for a few moments quietly. You can also do grounding if you prefer. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that. If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a place in your body that feels better. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s become aware of our breathing. Let’s see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back to your resource or grounding. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]*
- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *Now let’s end the practice and open our eyes. What did you notice? ” [Share aloud.]*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 20 minutes

What Do We Have in Common?

Overview

In this activity, students explore what they have in common with each other.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- As human beings, we all have things in common that we share.
- Some things we think might be common or true for all people might not actually be.
- One thing we share is that we are each unique.

Materials Required

- Markers
- Post-it notes
- Paper for each group
- Large chart paper or areas on the chart paper/whiteboard labeled “Things We Have in Common” and “Each of Us Is Unique”

Instructions

- Explain to students that you’ll be exploring commonalities and differences together.
- Ask students to turn to a classmate and ask how they might define the word, “diversity.” Then, take a few responses and very briefly discuss. (Diversity means having a high degree of variation or differences within a group. But this doesn’t mean that the group members don’t share important things in common.)

- Explain that your class’s exploration of diversity will begin with an exploration of commonalities.
- Provide an example to students of something that some people have in common, for example having, or wishing they had, a pet. Ask students to name something related to having a pet that fewer people have in common (for example, people who have a dog). Then, have them think of something related to having a dog that very few people have in common- for example, having a spotted puppy.
- Discuss another example with the class, perhaps focusing on something related more closely to identity (ethnicity, religion, etc.)
Note: If you know there is sensitivity or conflict around a particular identity issue in your class, do not use that issue as the example.
- Examples are below:
 - Many people enjoy some aspects of sports; many enjoy watching some type of sports. Fewer people may have in common that they actually play the sport. And even fewer than that are the people who train, and have the opportunities and gifts, to become highly competitive (Olympics, pro team) in that sport.
 - All people experience emotions. Many people notice and are able to describe times when they feel happy or sad or angry. Fewer people have grown their ability to recognize a wide range of emotions and are skilled at knowing what is contributing

to them feeling that way. Fewer people than that have practiced being able to consistently recognize their feelings in the moment, name them, and “pause” (stop before acting) in a way that helps them take care of themselves and interact with others in healthy and productive ways. Everyone has the potential to be in that last group, which means someday that may be the “Many people...” part of an example like this!

- Many people have a religion or faith. Some people are Hindu. Some people are Christian. Some practice one of many other faith traditions. Some people follow dietary guidelines because of their faith. Some people go to Temple or church on holy days. Some people have parents, or know adults, who practice different faiths.
- Divide the class into groups of three or four. Give each person a post-it note and each group a sheet of paper.
- Ask each group to write a title at the top of the paper, “Things We Have in Common.” Then, ask students to fold the paper in half lengthwise, then unfold it, and draw a line down the middle crease to divide the paper into two columns.
- Ask students to label the left hand side “With Many People” and the other “With Fewer People.”
- In a short amount of time, ask each group to come up with things everyone in their group has in common with many people. Groups can

write their ideas on the left side column of their paper.

- Next ask each student to take a few minutes to come up with three things related to the topics they already discussed, that they have in common with very few other people, or that they think are unique to them. Each student should write each of their three things on a separate post-it note and place it on the right hand side column of their group paper, labeled, "With Fewer People."
- Invite each group to share out loud what they have on their list of "Things We Have in Common."
- As groups share, write down the students' responses on a large sheet of chart paper or whiteboard. While doing so, check to see if everyone agrees that the items are indeed things that many people have in common with many other people. Only include the items that everyone agrees on. Write the items that the groups decide are less universally shared under the heading "With Fewer People."
- After each group has shared, ask students if they notice anything about the list that has been created.
- Next, ask if there are any items that everyone has in common that are not yet on the list. Prompt students to think of the things that have been discussed previously, such as: feelings, needs, the desire to be treated with kindness, having a nervous system, etc.

- Next, invite students to share one of the three things they wrote on their post-it notes that is unique about themselves, or that they believe they don't have in common with many people.
- As each student shares, have them place their post-it note on a large sheet of chart paper, labeled "Each of us is unique."
- Discuss with students if anything surprised them and how it felt to explore commonalities and diversity.

Teaching Tips

- You could facilitate a modified version of the Step In/Step Out activity and use the students items on the lists as the categories to step in or step out. (See Chapter 1, Learning Experience 1)
- If you write down all the things students have in common with many other people on a large sheet of chart paper, you can hang this in the classroom as a reminder about their commonalities.

Sample script

- *"Today we'll be exploring commonalities and difference together.*
- *Turn to a classmate and discuss for one minute: What does diversity mean? How would you define that word? [Take responses. Note that diversity can be defined as the condition of having or being composed of different elements, or the inclusion of different types of people in a group.]*

- To explore diversity, we're also going to consider our commonalities. We'll find out more later about how these are related.
- What are some examples of things many people have in common? Let's start with an example. For instance, many people have a pet. What is something related to having a pet that fewer people have in common? [They have a dog.] What is something related to having a dog that very few people have in common? [They have a spotted puppy.]
- Let's try another example. What are some other things many people have in common, that are important to their identity? [Pause for student input. It's ok for students to mention things like ethnicity. However, if you're aware that there is a sensitivity or conflict among your students regarding a particular identity issue, don't have them focus on that for the example or activity.]
- We're going to do an activity in small groups. [Divide the class into groups of three or four, giving each group a large sheet of paper to share and three post-it notes for each person.]
- One person in each group, please write "Things We Have in Common" at the top of your group's paper.
- Next, fold the paper in half lengthwise, and unfold it. Draw a line down the middle crease to divide your paper into two columns [Demonstrate this with your own paper.]
- Please write "With Many People" at the top of the left hand column and "With Fewer People" at the top of the right hand column.
- You have 3 minutes to think of things that everyone in your group has in common with one another, and maybe with many other people. Please record those things in the left column of your group paper. [Time 3 minutes, then use your regular attention signal to bring the group together for the next direction.]
- Ok, now we have another task. Each of you should think about what you personally have in common with very few other people. These are things that are unusual about you, or shared by few other people. You can get help from one another as you think about this. Try to think of three things each and write each of them down on a separate post-it note. When you're done, you can place the notes on the right side column of your paper. [Provide 3-5 minutes.]
- Let's share now what your group came up with, first for the column "Things We Have in Common - With Many People" [Ask groups to share, and record their responses on the whiteboard or large chart paper.]
- [After all the groups have shared, ask:] What do you notice about the list we made?
- Are there any items that everyone has in common that are not yet on the list? What about some of the things we have been exploring together during SEE Learning? [You may prompt students to think about:

feelings, needs, the desire to be treated with kindness, having a nervous system, etc. Take responses.]

- *What are some things that you share with only a few, of any people? You can share what you've written on your post-it note and then come place it on here on the "Each of Us is Unique" poster. Were you surprised by any of the things that you have in common with each other? Were you surprised by any of the differences? How does it feel to discuss commonalities and differences?"* [If a student does not mention it, note that, one similarity we each have is that we're each unique.]

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 7 minutes

Mindful Dialogue on Diversity and Respect

Overview

In this reflective practice, students will share their experiences with their own uniqueness, and their experiences of respecting diversity.

Content/Insights to be Explored

We each are unique and appreciate it when our uniqueness is respected.

Instructions

- Remind your students how to engage in mindful dialogue practice. Refer to the description in the previous learning experience as a guide.

- Lead your students in a mindful dialogue using the following questions. Give them 2-3 minutes for the first speaker to respond to the series of questions. Then, switch roles as the listener and the speaker and give the same amount of time for the second speaker.

Questions:

1. Think about a time when you realized you were different from others or unique in some way. How did you feel when you realized that?
2. What would it mean for other people to be respectful of diversity when interacting with you?
3. What are some things you could do to show respect for other people's differences and uniqueness?

DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- *"How might appreciating diversity help us in our classroom?"*
- *How might recognizing that despite our differences, we all want to be happy and treated with kindness, help us in our classroom, and in the world?"*
- *In what ways does listening and sharing about our experiences with diversity help us build appreciation and respect for one another?"*

Exploring Empathy

PURPOSE

This learning experience introduces a story to explore the concept and importance of perspective-taking and empathy. Empathy has two main components: being able to take another's perspective (cognitive empathy) and being able to feel an emotional resonance with them (affective empathy). Without perspective-taking we can misinterpret the motivations and

actions of others. Through sharing the perspectives of the characters and listening to their peers, students will experience the complexity of one person's perspective, which is an expression of their needs, feelings, and thoughts. Listening to and appreciating different perspectives as valid can lead to better problem-solving and more positive relationships.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Explore the meaning and components of empathy.
- Practice perspective-taking by wondering about a character's needs, feelings and thoughts.
- Practice listening to different points of view.
- Consider the value of perspective-taking in building positive relationships and solving problems.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Interpersonal Awareness

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- The story provided
- Per group: 1 set of 6 sheets of paper with the one role/character name written on each paper
- Timer
- Chime that all students can hear

LENGTH

40 minutes

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“Let’s prepare for a short attention practice. How do we want our body to be?”*
- *First we’ll take a comfortable and upright posture. Then we’ll keep our eyes on the ground or close them.*
- *Before we strengthen our attention, we’ll do some resourcing or grounding to calm our bodies. Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let’s just bring our resource to mind. And let’s see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we’re going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s become aware of our breathing. Let’s see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back*

to your resource or grounding, or just take a small break, making sure not to disturb anyone else. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]

- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *You can strengthen your attention by focusing on sensations or by focusing on the breath. It’s your choice - it’s always up to you.*
- *What did you notice?” [Share aloud.]*

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 8 minutes

What is Empathy?

Overview

Students will discuss the meaning of the word empathy and then discuss a story in which misunderstandings arise.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Each person has a unique perspective, which consists of their needs, feelings, thoughts, and more.
- We can’t fully know someone else’s perspective, but we can imagine what we might need, think, or feel if we were in their shoes.
- Empathy involves knowing what another person is feeling (cognitive empathy) as well as caring about what they are feeling (affective empathy).
- Our empathy can be accurately or inaccurately based (empathic accuracy), and we can

misinterpret others' intentions, especially when we are unaware of their perspective.

Materials Required

The story provided below

Instructions

- Write the word “empathy” on the board and ask students what they know about the term. Allow time for sharing.
- Explain that empathy has two main components: the first is knowing how someone else feels, and is linked to perspective-taking. The second is caring about how they feel and “feeling with” them. Come up with an agreed upon definition that is along the lines of: “Empathy is knowing how someone else feels and caring about how they feel.” Solicit examples of when one might have one of these two elements but not the other.
- Ask if sometimes we might be inaccurate about how another person feels. This is called “empathic accuracy.”
- Tell students you are going to read a short story together and then discuss it for instances of empathy, including empathic accuracy.
- Read the story to your students, followed by the discussion questions below.

Teaching Tips

If more appropriate, change the debate team in the story to another type of co-ed team or group at your school.

STORY | Tenzin and the Debate Team

“Nisha, the captain of the debate team, hears that a new student at the school, Tenzin, might be great for their team. At school, Nisha approaches Tenzin and says, “Tenzin! I hear you were on the debate team of your old school.”

“That’s right,” says Tenzin.

“Great!” says Nisha. “You should join our debate team here then. You could even help us win the championship this year! Joining the team will help you make lots of friends.”

“Thanks, I guess so,” says Tenzin.

Nisha tells their team coach, Coach Kay, that Tenzin is interested in joining and would be a great recruit for the team. Coach Kay says to Nisha, “Sure, that sounds like a good idea. Why don’t you and your teammates talk to Tenzin? You can invite Tenzin to our next match to observe, too.”

Tenzin goes home, where his grandfather, Mr. Patel, is waiting. “How is the new school?” Mr. Patel asks.

Tenzin says, “It’s okay. The captain of the debate team really wants me to join the team, but I already tried debate at my last school and I wasn’t very good. I really want to join the art club instead. I think that art is my true passion.”

Mr. Patel, thinking of his own schooldays, says, “It’s important to try new things, Tenzin. You

may feel conflicted, but it seems you really want to experience the art club instead, and I support you. Follow your heart.”

Tenzin returns to school the next day and sees Coach Kay, who is also Tenzin’s math teacher. Coach Kay says, “Hello, Tenzin! Nisha tells me that you want to join the debate club. We are looking forward to having you at our next match!”

At lunch, team members Toni and Desmond invite Tenzin to sit with them and offer Tenzin candy they brought from home. Tenzin starts to get nervous. It seems there might have been a misunderstanding.”

Characters in the story

1. Tenzin, a new student
2. Nisha, captain of the debate team
3. Coach Kay, team coach and math teacher
4. Mr. Patel, Tenzin’s grandfather
5. Toni, teammate of Nisha and Desmond
6. Desmond, teammate of Nisha and Toni

Discussion Questions

- Where in the story do you think a misunderstanding occurred? Why do you think so? [Encourage the class to generate a list of points of misunderstanding.]
- What do you think Tenzin was needing, thinking, or feeling when talking to Nisha?
- What do you think Tenzin was needing, thinking, or feeling when sitting with Desmond and Toni?

- Where did you notice moments of empathy or lack of empathy?
- How might the characters in the story have improved their perspective-taking or empathic accuracy?

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 20 minutes

Circle of Truths

Overview

In this insight activity, students take the perspectives of each of the characters in the story in order to practice using their imagination and empathy to consider what each person might be feeling or thinking. They will have the opportunity to share a thought, feeling, or need from each character’s point of view. This activity format is similar to the mindful dialogue previously introduced to students, because instead of discussion there is focused sharing and listening. The activity focuses specifically on perspective-taking.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We can’t fully know someone else’s perspective, but we can imagine what they might need, feel, or think if we were in their shoes.
- Listening to the perspectives of others can bring us to a deeper understanding about a conflict or issue.
- There can be obstacles to perspective-taking (such as strong emotions, stress, lack of safety, inattention, and poor communication skills).

Often, these obstacles can be overcome by intentionally using skills we've already learned.

- Listening to the perspectives of others can help us show respect and build positive relationships.

Materials Required

- Timer
- Chime that all students can hear
- Per group: 1 set of 6 sheets of paper, each of which has one role/character name written on it

Instructions

- Explain to students that they will be doing an exercise to explore empathy and perspective-taking.
- Explain that the format for this exercise will be similar to mindful dialogues, except in small groups. There will be listeners and speakers, but no back-and-forth conversations.
- Model how this format will work with 5 student volunteers. Explain the process (below) then and model a few example comments with appropriate thoughtfulness and depth. Then show everyone how when the chime sounds, participants rotate one spot on the circle, leaving their "character sheet" in place. Provide 30-60 seconds of private think time again, about how they would feel with their new role.
- Students will form groups of six, standing in a circle. Each person will have one paper, on which a character's name is written. That will be the character whose perspective they will speak to during the first round.
- Each round begins with a 30-60 second private think time, during which students consider the thoughts, needs, and feelings of their assigned character. Each student develops one sentence explaining their perspective that they will share with the group, once the sharing time begins.
- Following the private think time, students will take turns around the circle, sharing one sentence that explains their needs, feelings, or thoughts from that character's point of view at a particular point in the story, of their choice. Students should speak in the first person, as if they are the character themselves.
- There is no discussion (no questions, comments, or replies to what someone else said) during the sharing time. Each student simply shares their sentence with the group, with the intent that this character will be better understood.
- Once every student has shared, ring the chime again and instruct students to rotate clockwise one spot, leaving the character's paper in place. Each student now takes on the role of their new character. The next round begins with another 30-60 seconds of silence, as students consider their feelings/thoughts from that character's perspective, and come up with another sentence to share.
- Ring the chime and let students know it's sharing time again.

- After the third round, encourage students to try to share a perspective from their assigned character that they have not heard yet.
- Repeat this cycle so that each student takes on each of the roles, as time permits. Groups with fewer than six members can repeat the original round if need be. The value lies in taking multiple perspectives on the same situation, so build in time for at least three turns.
- Debrief the experience with a group discussion (questions below).

Teaching Tips

- Depending on the size of your group, you can also consider doing this activity as a fish bowl, where one group of 6 students engages in the activity while the other students act as observers. If you choose this method, prepare the outside circle (observers) to each have a focus student to whom they'll give written and/or verbal feedback related to the discussion norms the class already holds, and about the content of the focus student's responses.
- Circulate around the room to listen to the small group sharing during the activity so that you can support students as needed.
- Students may need a reminder to not have discussions and to follow the protocols of this activity.
- Students may need a reminder to speak from their assigned character's point of view, as if they were that character. Set the tone with

your students about how to do this, bringing forward their character's feelings and ideas, without using a different kind of voice or "acting." Help build an environment that is respectful of demonstrating the variety of perspectives in a personal way, using one's own voice, to show it's possible to relate to another person's view of a situation even when it is not your own. Model the appropriate thoughtfulness and depth of response. This can be achieved by encouraging students to use complex sentences that use the word "because." For example, "I feel...because..." or "I think that...because...and I."

Sample script

- *"The next activity is a perspective-taking exercise, using the story we just listened to. As we just explored, taking someone's perspective means you place yourself in their shoes and imagine what they might need, or how they might feel or think. We talked a lot about Tenzin, but there were five other characters in this story, each with their own perspective.*
- *This activity will be done in small groups, standing in a circle. Your group will get a set of papers that each has one of the character's names on it. The paper you get will be your first role, the one that you're going to speak for, sincerely sharing what you believe that person might have been thinking or feeling at a particular moment in the story. We will do multiple rounds so that each person in your group can get to experience different*

roles. We'll begin with a minute or so of private think time, so you can reflect on how you imagine that character would feel or was thinking at some action point in the story. Decide on one sentence that explains the perspective, from that person's point of view, of what was happening and why. Then, I will ring the chime and each of you will share your sentence, one at a time around your circle. There is no discussion during this activity. You will each simply share your perspective in one sentence while the others listen with an open mind, and then that round will end. When you hear the chime that says it's time for the next round to begin, everyone will rotate one spot clockwise, so that each of you is standing in front of a new role. You will have about a minute of private think time again to think of a sentence to share. Then, I will ring the chime and it will be sharing time again within your circle.

- Can I have 5 volunteers so we can quickly demonstrate how to do this? [Do not demonstrate a full round here, but have students place themselves in a circle, and use a timer to give everyone 30-60 seconds to consider their perspective. Then, ring the chime and, after modeling by sharing a sentence from your character's perspective, ask one or two of the volunteer students to share what they might say from their character's perspective. Remind them, and demonstrate yourself, that each person is speaking as if they are the person whose role they have been assigned, not acting or using a different voice. Speaking directly from the

character's perspective shows that you are taking on that way of seeing the experience, not pretending. It demonstrates that even if you haven't shared that experience or feeling, you can understand how someone else could.]

- You can encourage students to use complex sentences, such as "I am feeling frustrated because I put so much work into this project and now we have a new group member to deal with." Then demonstrate ringing the chime and everyone rotating one place, giving time again to consider their next role.
- Now let's get into groups of 6. It's ok if we have some groups of 5.
- Is everyone standing in front of your assigned role? [Check to see that groups are arranged in circles with the roles laid out on the floor at their feet.]
- I will ring the chime and you will have time to silently consider the perspective of your character. You will have a minute or so to come up with a sentence that describes your perspective, which might include your needs, feelings, or thoughts, at some point in the story. Your goal is to, with best intentions, help the others in your circle truly understand what was in the heart or on the mind of your character.
- Ok, silent thinking. [Ring chime. Set timer for 60 seconds.]
- [Ring chime] Ok, now it is sharing time. Whoever is speaking for (character name), will start each round. Please begin.

- [When you see that the groups have had a chance for everyone to share their sentence, ring the chime again.] *Now, rotate one place, going clockwise, and consider your next role. You will have about a minute again to put yourself into the shoes of that character. When you hear the chime again, we'll begin the next round.* [Set timer.]
- [Ring chime.] *Ok, now it's sharing time. Please begin."*
- [Repeat the movement—private think time—sharing cycle for several rounds, considering time and engagement level. As students are about to begin their third round of private think time, encourage them to try to share a perspective from this new role that they have not heard yet.]
- *Why is perspective-taking important in friendships and relationships?*
- *Why might people find it difficult to engage in perspective-taking? What are obstacles that might make perspective-taking challenging? (Strong emotions; not being in one's resilient zone; lack of communication; prejudice or fixed ideas; inattention; poor communication skills; etc.)*
- *How can these obstacles be addressed?"*

Group Discussion Questions

Debrief with one or more, as time permits.

- *"How did it feel to step into the shoes of each of the characters, to try to truly understand what they were thinking and feeling?*
- *What did you learn or what surprised you from listening to the perspectives shared by others?*
- *Did you find yourself either judging or feeling more understanding towards a character when someone shared their perspective?*
- *Now, imagine yourself stepping into the story. How might understanding these perspectives help you solve this problem at different points in the story?*

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 6 minutes

A Time When Empathy Helped

Overview

In this reflective practice, students will recall a case from their own life in which perspective-taking and empathy helped or could have helped.

Content/Insights to be Explored

Empathy and perspective-taking can play an important role in misunderstandings and clearing them up.

Materials Required

- Paper and drawing tools for each student

Instructions

- Write these questions on the board:
 - How was empathy or perspective-taking happening or not happening?
 - What helped or would have helped the people involved be able to empathize better?

- Ask students to take a moment to recall a small misunderstanding that they have seen or participated in where perspective-taking helped or could have helped.
 - Ask them to draw and/or write about the scenario in silence individually, as a way to personally reflect on this idea. Let them know sharing with the group will be optional, not required.
 - Invite a few volunteers to share but do not require anyone to share who doesn't want to.
-

DEBRIEF | 2 minutes

- *"When could you practice empathy or perspective-taking over the next week?"*
- *What might be helpful about doing so?"*

MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 6

Compassion for Self and Others

Overview

Adolescence is a time of rapid and at times seemingly uneven development. This makes for a time of great opportunity, and also potentially great stress. While 95% of brain structure has been developed within the first six or so years of life, the stage of adolescence sees the further growth and reorganization of the prefrontal cortex. This part of the brain is associated with reason, impulse and cognitive control, and decision-making. While this development allows for greater perspective taking and consideration of others, it is also associated with greater emotional reactivity and risk-taking. As students' social identities mature, they come to include strong relationships with peers, and not just family members. With this can come a fear of social rejection and social isolation, and a heightened susceptibility to peer influence and social comparisons. As a result, a high number of students at this age struggle with anxiety about academics and other pressures, social anxiety, and self-esteem and self-worth issues.

Adolescence is also a particularly important time for identity formation. A central part of identity formation is how we relate to ourselves and how we view ourselves: our self-concept. Do we treat ourselves with kindness, understanding, and compassion, aware of our limitations but also aware of our capabilities and the fact that we are always growing and changing? Or do we look on our current state with frustration, impatience, and disappointment, comparing ourselves unfavorably to others and to the idealized images presented in society and on social media?

This time of development is therefore a crucial stage. Despite the challenges they face, students at this age have greater resources for caring for themselves and others than at any time before in their lives. It is therefore an especially opportune time to explore empathy, compassion, and self-compassion with them. This is the theme of Chapter 6.

In *Building Resilience from the Inside Out*, Linda Lantieri writes, "Adolescents no longer inhabit a world defined by grownups, but rather one defined by their peers. While they push us away, they in fact still need the guidance and understanding of the significant adults in their lives to help them navigate this tumultuous time. Young people also need time for self-reflection and to turn inward in order to define their own sense of meaning and purpose for their life, yearnings which are inherent in this developmental stage."

What is Self-Compassion?

Psychologist Dr. Kristin Neff, one of the world's leading experts on the topic, writes that self-compassion means being "kind and understanding when confronted with personal failings."¹

¹ <https://self-compassion.org/the-three-elements-of-self-compassion-2/>

In SEE Learning self-compassion has two critical components. The first is self-acceptance, which, as Dr. Neff notes, involves being kind and understanding to oneself when one encounters setbacks, difficulties, or failures, or when we do not live up to our own or others' expectations. The second is the confidence and courage that one can bring about inner change that can facilitate greater personal happiness and opportunities for flourishing. Both elements, and especially the second, benefit from critical thinking. For example, if a student has internalized the idea that they have to be the best at everything in order to feel happy and accepted, or that they could never be happy unless others found them more physically attractive, self-compassion would involve recognizing that these attitudes are untrue and unhelpful, and feeling empowered to be able to shift to more productive and constructive attitudes.

Both external and internal environments affect the well-being of students and their ability to flourish personally and academically. Yet students often have less choice regarding their external environment (such as location, school, family situation, and so on) than their internal one, especially once they cultivate a greater ability to observe their mind, direct their attention, regulate their nervous system, and navigate emotions. Teaching students that they can cultivate self-acceptance, self-compassion, patience, and perseverance can be empowering. When combined with practical skills, these internal messages can bolster their resilience and enhance self-efficacy as they move through the evolving external environments they encounter.

For this reason, Learning Experience 1 "Exploring Self-Compassion," introduces the concept of self-care and self-compassion. Learning Experience 2, "Exploring Attitudes and Expectations," takes this further, by examining some of the unrealistic expectations students may have due to images presented in society and in the media. Is it possible to be good at everything? What happens when we make mistakes or even feel that we have "failed" at something? What can we learn from such experiences? Is it realistic to expect we will achieve every goal right away? Students will identify when attitudes become problematic and explore how they might approach challenges in their lives in a more fruitful way.

What is Compassion?

Learning Experiences 3 and 4 then shift to compassion for others. Dr. Thupten Jinpa, a noted scholar on compassion, defines compassion as "a sense of concern that arises when we are confronted with another person's suffering and feel motivated to see that suffering relieved."² Compassion depends

² Jinpa, Thupten. *A Fearless Heart: How the courage to be compassionate can transform our lives* (Avery, 2016), xx.

on awareness of the other’s situation and an ability to empathize with them, combined with a sense of affection or endearment towards that person, at even the most basic level of human connection.

A practical way of approaching compassion is through the lens of forgiveness. Learning Experience 3 therefore asks students to reflect on when we are willing to forgive and when we are not. The focus here is on what psychologists call “intrapersonal forgiveness,” which means the releasing of anger and negative emotions towards a person or event, rather than “interpersonal forgiveness,” which involves active reconciliation or the act of telling someone they are forgiven. This intrapersonal forgiveness or “inner reconciliation” is an internal process that does not necessarily involve the other person at all. Here, one objective is for students to recognize the link between awareness and compassion: how when we are able to see the wider context of a person’s situation, including their past experiences and inner struggles, this awareness may help us feel more inclined to forgive them, and our anger may transform into compassion.

Importantly, forgiveness and compassion do not mean accepting wrong-doing. Learning Experience 4, “Exploring Active Compassion,” examines how active compassion sometimes requires doing things that are difficult or that others may not even like. Compassion has varying degrees of intensity. While “wishing compassion” involves the heartfelt wish that others be relieved of suffering, “active compassion” is stronger and involves taking personal responsibility to do whatever can be done to help. This type of compassion is a form of inner strength that compels one to do what is in the best interests of others. Sometimes this involves saying no or not giving people what they want, and instances of this are explored in the learning experience. Here, it is important for students to explore how compassion—far from preventing them from doing the right thing, resisting peer-pressure, or acting with integrity—can help them stand up to others when necessary and do what is in their own and others’ best long-term interests.

Student Personal Practice

Many of the skills and practices that have been taught in SEE Learning are actually practices of self-compassion and compassion for others. For example, the resilience skills of grounding, resourcing and Help Now! in Chapter 2 are practices of self-compassion. Navigating one’s emotions can also be a practice of self-compassion, as is forgiveness, since it releases one from strong negative emotions that disturb one’s happiness and peace of mind. Similarly, mindful listening and paying attention to others can be acts of compassion and kindness. By pointing out the skills students are already developing and naming them as acts of self-compassion and compassion, you can help your students to recognize how they are already practicing self-compassion and compassion

for others. This builds a strong foundation, helping them find ways to explore the more complex material presented in this chapter, giving them opportunities to reflect on how their expectations and attitudes contribute to or hinder their flourishing and well-being.

Teacher Personal Practice

The expectations on educators, and those that educators place on themselves, can sometimes be extraordinarily high. You may wish to take this time to explore your own self-talk. When do you encourage yourself and when do you notice instances of negative self-talk? Are there unrealistic expectations that you place on yourself or your students, and if so, how could you make them more healthy and do-able? What practices of self-compassion and compassion for others are you already engaged in, and how could you build on these, practicing them more, or adding to them?

Further Reading and Resources

- Dr. Kristen Neff's book *Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself* (William Morrow, 2015) is an excellent introduction by the leading researcher on the topic of self-compassion and is also available in audiobook format. Dr. Neff's website also contains a number of helpful resources: www.self-compassion.org
- *A Fearless Heart: How the Courage to Be Compassionate Can Transform Our Lives* (Avery, 2016) by Dr. Thupten Jinpa is an excellent research-based introduction to compassion and self-compassion.

Parent/Caregiver Information Letter



Date: _____

Dear Parent or Caregiver,

This letter is to inform you that your child is now starting **SEE Learning, Chapter 6, "Compassion for Self and Others."** You may remember that SEE Learning is a K-12 educational program created by Emory University to enrich young people's social, emotional, and ethical (SEE) development.

In Chapter 6, your child will be learning to practice self-compassion and compassion for others. We will be thinking together about how to be kind to ourselves, through positive self-talk, and will look at ways in which thinking about our intentions and motivations can help us act in compassionate ways. We will also be exploring forgiveness (releasing our negative feelings towards another person) and the idea that when we understand someone's feelings and life circumstances, it can help us feel more forgiving and compassionate towards them.

Home Practice

As your child goes through this chapter, it will be helpful for you to ask them what self-compassion, and being compassionate to others, means to them. You might also like to share a story with your child about a time when, despite the difficulty in doing so, you forgave someone and it led to a positive result of more happiness.

Earlier chapters included

- Chapter 1 explored the concepts of kindness and happiness through helping to form of class agreements.
- Chapter 2 explored the important role that our bodies, and in particular our nervous system, play in our happiness and well-being.
- Chapter 3 addressed to the topic of attention, including why it is important, how to strengthen it, and how we can use it to cultivate insight into ourselves.
- Chapter 4 explored the topic of emotions, how they arise, and how to better "navigate them."
- Chapter 5 addressed appreciating differences and recognizing our shared common humanity. It also introduced the practice of mindful listening.

Further Reading and Resources

Remember that the SEE Learning Framework, contained within the *SEE Learning Companion*, contains an explanation of the entire curriculum. You may access it on the web at: www.compassion.emory.edu.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

Teacher/Educator Signature



Center for
Contemplative Science and
Compassion-Based Ethics

EMORY UNIVERSITY

Teacher/Educator Printed Name: _____

Teacher/Educator Contact Info: _____

Exploring Self-Compassion

PURPOSE

The first learning experience introduces the concept of self-care and self-compassion through prompts for critical inquiry and reflection. In order for students to generate interest and motivation in exploring the topic of self-compassion, it explores (a) what is self-compassion and what is it good for; (b) how students are already exhibiting self-compassion; and (c) areas where they

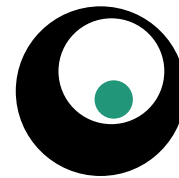
feel their self-compassion could grow. It then introduces the concept of inner environments and outer environments: just as we want an outer environment of people exhibiting kindness and consideration to us, so too do we want an inner environment (our own mind, attitudes, perspectives, and emotions) that is conducive to happiness and flourishing.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Explore practices of compassion for others.
- Explore the concept of self-compassion.
- Explore ways in which they are exhibiting self-compassion already.
- Explore areas where their self-compassion could grow.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Self-Compassion

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- A copy of the Insight Activity handout for each student or pair
- A copy of the Reflective Practice handout for each student
- Writing utensils for each student
- Markers
- Whiteboard or chart paper

LENGTH

35 minutes

CHECK-IN | 5 minutes

- *“Let’s prepare for a short attention practice. How do we want our body to be?”*
- *First we’ll take a comfortable and upright posture. Then we’ll keep our eyes on the ground or close them.*
- *Before we strengthen our attention, we’ll do some resourcing or grounding to calm our bodies. Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let’s just bring our resource to mind. And let’s see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we’re going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s become aware of our breathing. Let’s see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back to your resource or grounding, or just take*

a small break, making sure not to disturb anyone else. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]

- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *You can strengthen your attention by focusing on sensations or by focusing on the breath. It’s your choice - it’s always up to you.*
- *What did you notice?” [Share aloud.]*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 10 minutes

Practicing Compassion with Friends

Overview

In this insight activity, students brainstorm how we might be kind to someone who is discouraged, using positive talk.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We can talk positively to a friend experiencing difficulties.
- There are specific things we can say and do to encourage and help someone who is discouraged.

Materials Required

- A copy of the Insight Activity handout for each student or pair
- Writing utensils for each student
- Markers
- Whiteboard or chart paper

Instructions

- Discuss what is positive talk and negative talk.
- In partners or as a whole group, students discuss the provided prompts and questions. Tell them to imagine the prompt is coming from a friend, and when the friend says the prompt, it's clear that they are feeling pretty down about it.
- Guidelines:
 - Use positive talk that is helpful, compassionate, true, and useful.
 - Try NOT talk about yourself or your own experiences.
- Invite students to brainstorm for several or all of the prompts. Write the students' positive talk to friends on the board.
 - *"What sensations might they be feeling in their body?"*
 - *What might you say to them that is kind and that may help them feel less sad?*
 - *How might you help them see the situation differently so that they might feel less discouraged?*
 - *What kind of tone and body language might you use to be helpful to your friend?*
 - *If you can't think of something compassionate and helpful to say, what else could you do to let them know you hear them?"*

Prompts

1. *"Running on the field during recess, I tripped on my shoelaces and fell, ripping the knees in my new jeans. I'm so stupid."*
2. *"I found out I wasn't chosen for the basketball team for this season. I'm never going to make it onto a team."*
3. *"Ms. Duff asked me to pass out graded homework to the class, and I dropped the stack of papers on the floor in the front of the room. When I bent over to pick them up, everybody laughed at me."*
4. *"I worked on my essay for four hours and thought it was perfect. But my teacher corrected my mistakes and said I have to revise it and resubmit tomorrow. Why is it so much harder for me to write than for everyone else?"*
5. *"In the cafeteria, my tray full of food slipped out of my hands and spilled all over the floor and my shoes. I'm such a clumsy idiot."*

Teaching Tips

As an alternative, you could cut the prompts into strips and have students respond to them with partners, using the mindful dialogue protocol.

Sample script

- *"We've been learning a lot why it's important to show kindness and compassion. And we've learned different ways of being kind to each other. Let's review a little bit."*
- *Let's say we have a close friend or family member and they try to do something but it doesn't work. Like maybe it was their job*

to take pictures at a party, but none of the pictures came out right, and they feel really bad about it.

- What might we say to them to be kind and help them to feel less sad? How might we try to encourage them? [Give students a chance to share ideas.]
- We can call saying things that are compassionate, kind, helpful, and true “positive talk.” When we say the word “positive” here, we mean things that are helpful, compassionate, true, and useful.
- Are there any helping actions we’ve learned that could be useful in a situation like this? [Give students a chance to share ideas.]
- If we were to discourage someone or say things that are mean or not helpful to them, we would call that “negative talk.” Negative is the opposite of positive. When we say the word “negative” here, we are talking about things that are unhelpful and unkind.
- Let’s practice positive talk as though we’re talking to a friend. You’ll do this with a partner.
- Take a look at the prompts on the handout. Select one you will say to your partner and decide who will go first.
- The first partner will say their prompt and the second partner will reply using positive talk. Then switch roles, using a different prompt. If you have time, try another prompt each. Then we’ll share the positive talk as a group. [Provide time for students to read over the

prompts and practice positive talk with each other.]

- Ok, now let’s share out some examples of the positive talk we used.” [Allow students to share, as you record their positive talk on the board or chart.]

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 7 minutes

Self-Compassion & Positive Talk

Overview

This discussion explores the idea of whether one can be compassionate to oneself and what that might look like. One can learn to recognize negative self-talk and its unhelpful effects. One can also learn to offer oneself the kindness one would offer a friend.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We can talk positively to a friend experiencing difficulties.
- We can talk positively to ourselves when we face difficulties.
- There are specific things we can say and do to encourage and help someone who is discouraged.
- Some of these things we can also say and do for ourselves when we are discouraged.

Materials Required

- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Markers

Instructions

- Lead a discussion with your students about self-compassion and the difference between positive (helpful, true, kind, encouraging) talk and negative (unhelpful, untrue, unkind, discouraging) talk.
- Encourage students to think about how we are able to have positive self-talk with ourselves when we face difficulties, treating ourselves as kindly as we would a friend.
- Start to explore the relationship between positive and negative self-talk and our perspectives (how we see things).

Sample script

- *“What are some examples of positive and negative talk that people sometimes direct towards ourselves? [Give students a chance to share ideas.]*
- *When are some times you say kind or encouraging things to yourself? What might you say? [Give students a chance to share ideas.]*
- *It can take practice to become comfortable saying these things to ourselves. [Ask them to try saying some of the positive talk to themselves about a specific situation.]
What does that feel like?*
- ***Self-compassion is when we show kindness and compassion to ourselves.***
- *You just generated a whole list of ways to support a friend who was feeling sad or discouraged. What if it was us, ourselves, who*

had not succeeded and we were the ones feeling bad? Like if it was me, I might say or think things to myself, like “I’m no good. I’ll never be able to do this!” And then it might get even worse. I might start to think, “I’m no good at anything!” Then, instead of trying harder or practicing more so that I can succeed, I might just give up. I might even feel like a failure for a while. This can happen for anybody sometimes. What kinds of situations might lead to a person feeling that way? [Give students a chance to share ideas.]

- *These aren’t very kind things for me to say to myself. They’re not things I would say to a friend.*
- *But when I am kind to myself, the way I’m kind to a friend who is having problems, then that is being positive. When I’m kind to myself, when I use positive self-talk, I’m practicing self-compassion.”*

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 10 minutes

Being Kind to Ourselves

Overview

In this reflective practice, students apply what they have been learning to their own lives by writing and drawing the ways they are already practicing self-kindness when they are discouraged. They then add additional ways they think they could be more kind to themselves.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We already engage in many acts of self-kindness.

- We can learn more acts of self-kindness from others.
- We can add to our tools of how to be kind to ourselves.

Materials Required

- Tools for writing and drawing

Instructions

- Provide each student with a piece of paper and drawing tools.
- Read the directions on the handout and give them time to work on it.
- Ask for volunteer students to share their ideas, if they are willing.
- Having heard all these ways of being kind to oneself, ask them to return to their drawings and add any new ways they could be kind to themselves in the future. These could be things they have heard from others, or new things that they imagine they could do.
- Collect the reflective practice sheets if you want to. Review them to see how students understood, and responded to, the concept of self-compassion.

Sample script

- *“Ok, now we’re going to do our personal reflective practice. This is independent work, so you’ll have your own private time to think, write and draw about your own ideas. I’ll ask for volunteers to share, if you’d like to, in a few minutes.*

- *Look at the handout I gave you. A volunteer, please, to read the directions out loud?*

- *Go ahead and get started. I’ll put on some music as you work. [Give students at least 4 minutes to draw/write.]*

- *[Before soliciting examples in front of the whole group, direct students to turn to a nearby classmate and share their drawing and self-talk examples with each other.] Let’s hear some examples of positive self-talk. Who will get us started? [Allow students to share with the class. Go first if students hesitate.]*

- *After listening to each other share, what other ways of speaking positively to yourself in the future can you add? Go ahead and do that now. [Allow time to share/draw/write.]*

- *I’d like to collect your reflective practices unless you’d like to keep yours. It’ll be your exit ticket as you leave class today, so either hand it to me or show it to me and let me know you’re taking yours with you.”*

DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- *“What are some challenges and benefits of practicing using kind thoughts and words with ourself, as we would to a friend?*

- *What did you learn that you would like to remember?”*

Your friend comes to tell you [choose a prompt from below]. **It's clear that they are feeling pretty down about it.**

Guidelines:

- Use positive talk that is helpful, compassionate, true, and useful.
- Try not talk about yourself or your own experiences.
- If you can't think of something compassionate and helpful to say, what else could you do to let them know you hear them and are a friend?

Prompts	Body Sensations Your Friend Might Be Feeling	Positive Talk You Might Use <i>(If you can't think of something compassionate and helpful to say, what else could you do to let them know you hear them and are a friend?)</i>	Tone & Body Language You Might Use
1. "Running on the field during recess, I tripped on my shoelaces and fell, ripping the knees in my new jeans. I'm so stupid."			
2. "I found out I wasn't chosen for the basketball team for this season. I'm never going to make it onto a team."			
3. "Ms. Duff asked me to pass out graded homework to the class, and I dropped the stack of papers on the floor in the front of the room. When I bent over to pick them up, everybody laughed at me."			
4. "I worked on my essay for four hours and thought it was perfect. But my teacher corrected my mistakes and said I have to revise it and resubmit tomorrow. Why is it so much harder for me to write than for everyone else?"			
5. "In the cafeteria, my tray full of food slipped out of my hands and spilled all over the floor and my shoes. I'm such a clumsy idiot."			

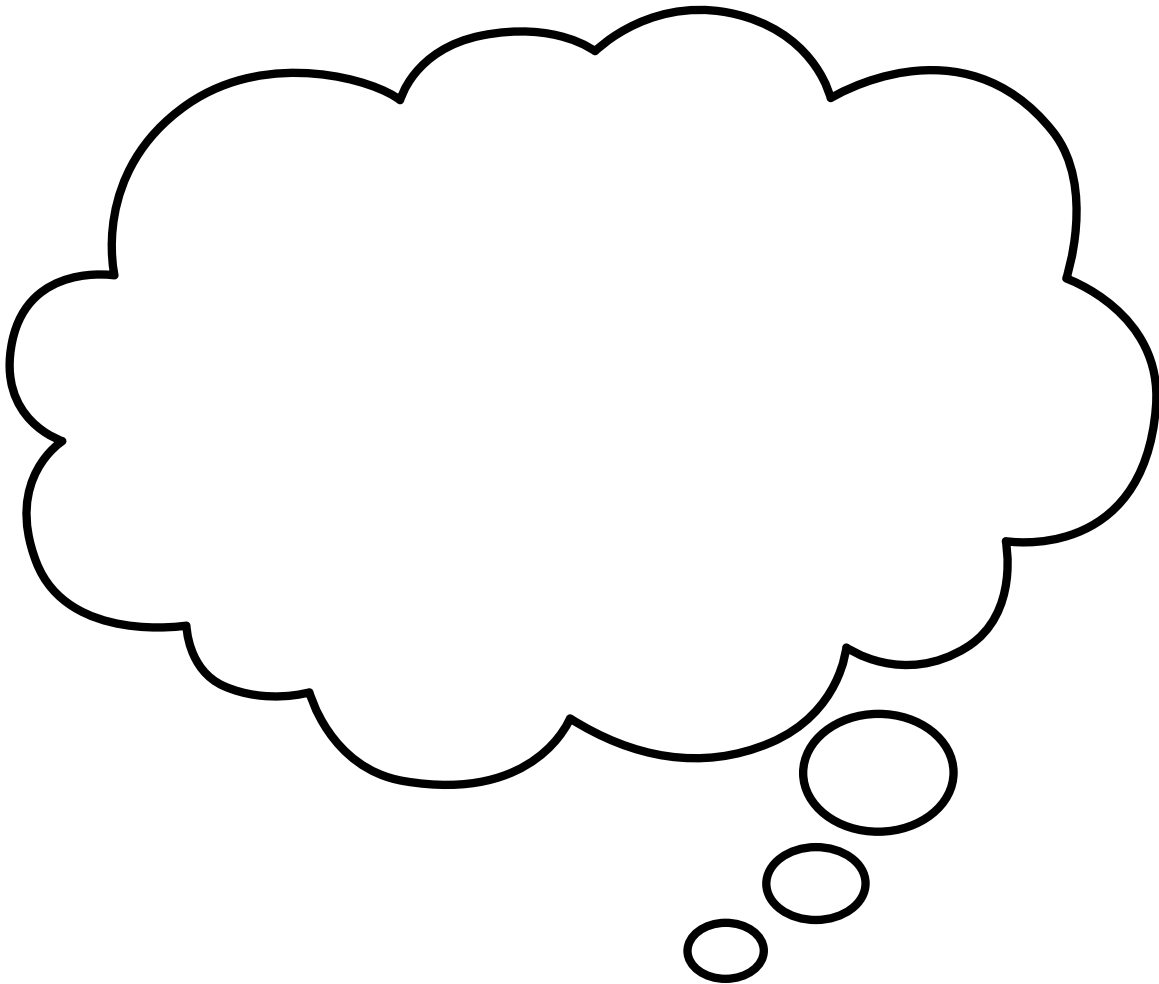
Reflective Practice:

Name _____

Being Kind to Ourselves with Positive Self-Talk

- Think about a time when something was really difficult at first, but you became better at it with practice and time. How did you support yourself with positive talk?
- What compassionate things do you say to yourself during challenging times?

Directions: Draw yourself doing something that is or was a struggle for you, or during a time when you felt discouraged. In the thought bubble, write positive self-talk you could use to help yourself like you would for a friend.



Exploring Attitude and Expectations

PURPOSE

This learning experience examines unrealistic expectations, the negative effects they can have on students' sense of self-worth, and how to adjust them to cultivate humility and self-confidence. Students will explore perfectionism and such questions as: Is it possible to be good at everything? What happens when we make mistakes or feel we

have "failed" at something? Is it realistic to expect we will achieve every goal right away or excel in every area? After students identify which attitudes and expectations are unhelpful in their own lives, they will design practices for themselves that can help cultivate positive self-regard through more realistic expectations of themselves.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

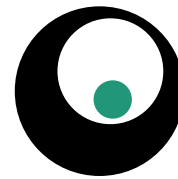
Students will:

- Explore the myth of perfectionism and the ways in which it leads to unrealistic expectations.
- Explore "growth mindset," one's ability to grow and learn from mistakes and setbacks.
- Explore how difficult feelings, setbacks, and limitations are common features of everyone's life.
- Identify positive ways of responding to one's limitations and "failures."

LENGTH

40 minutes

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Self-Compassion

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- One sign that says "Yes" and one that says "No"
- Enough space for students to move around an imagined continuum line
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Paper
- Notecards
- Writing utensils
- Discussion handout included at the end of this learning experience

CHECK-IN | 3 minutes

- *“Let’s prepare for a short attention practice. How do we want our body to be?”*
- *First we’ll take a comfortable and upright posture. Then we’ll keep our eyes on the ground or close them.*
- *Before we strengthen our attention, we’ll do some resourcing or grounding to calm our bodies. Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let’s just bring our resource to mind. And let’s see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we’re going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s become aware of our breathing. Let’s see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back to your resource or grounding, or just take*

a small break, making sure not to disturb anyone else. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]

- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *You can strengthen your attention by focusing on sensations or by focusing on the breath. It’s your choice - it’s always up to you.*
- *What did you notice?” [Share aloud.]*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 10 minutes

Stand by Your Opinion

Overview

Through participating in a continuum exercise, students explore and express their beliefs around the ideas of perfectionism, failure, and a growth mindset.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Having unrealistic expectations can cause us to be hard on ourselves in ways that are unhelpful.
- Cultivating a growth mindset and patience can help one be more realistic when encountering setbacks.

Materials Required

- Enough space for students to move around an imagined continuum line;
- A sign that reads “Yes” and one that reads “No” that can be placed on either end of

a line (the line can be imaginary or can be created with colored tape on the floor)

Instructions

- Place the Yes/No signs at opposite ends of the continuum line.
- Explain to students that you will be reading statements and asking them to show their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement by standing along an imaginary continuum, with the ends being marked by the signs.
- Demonstrate to students where a person would stand, depending on the degree to which they are in agreement or disagreement with the statement, so they are clear on how to express their opinion.
- Tell students there are absolutely no right or wrong responses to the statements and that they should stand based on their own opinion.
- Let students know that they will be sharing their thoughts with each other and refer to the group agreement that your class has in place, that addresses how they've agreed to do this type of work with each other, listening and sharing respectfully and agreeing to disagree without being disagreeable.
- Invite all students to stand up and get ready to listen to the first statement. Let them know there will be a brief period of think time before anyone moves to a position on the line.
- Read the first statement below. Give students 10 seconds to think about it and then ask everyone to move to show their opinion (agree/disagree). Tell them to stand anywhere on the continuum that fits with their experience, showing the degree to which they agree or disagree with the statement.
- Once students are in place, ask them to turn and talk to one or two others who are near them and share why they chose to stand where they are standing. (If a student is standing alone, the teacher should be their partner.)
- Encourage everyone to maintain an open mind while listening to a few students along the continuum speak about their thinking that led to choosing that spot on the continuum.
- After listening to the volunteers, invite students to move if they have changed their mind. Invite those who move to share what changed for them.
- Continue the same process with the remaining prompts. End with the group discussion question.

Teaching Tips

- Make sure all voices have been heard by the whole group at least once if possible, and be careful of dominating voices.
- **The statements in bold are the most important for this activity.** If you have time and would like to include the others, please do.

- Remember, there are no right or wrong responses to these statements. They are designed to facilitate discussion and sharing. You want to be a neutral listener during the activity to allow for differences of opinion.
- This activity may lead to rich discussions that take time, and if you find you are having a rich discussion during the insight activity, consider extending the activity, eliminating the reflective practice, and ending the session with the debrief. Then come back to the activity the next time you meet, do the remaining prompts, and finish off the second time with the reflective practice.

Statements

- **You can get good at most things if you work hard and practice over a long period of time.**
- Being the best at something or finishing in first place doesn't necessarily make someone happy.
- **I like to be the best at whatever I do.**
- When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the care and compassion I need.
- It's okay and natural to not be good at something if you've just started at it.
- **When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.**
- It's sometimes good to be below average at something.
- When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.
- **Failure can be a good way to learn.**
- When I fail at something important to me, I sometimes feel embarrassed and disappointed.
- I try to accept things about myself that I don't like.
- **It's possible to be perfect. [End the activity with this one, no matter how many statements you use.]**

Sample Script

- *"For this activity, we will be sharing personal experiences with each other. Which of our group agreements could we use to help guide our discussion today? [Allow time for review of agreements and for sharing.]*
- *I'm going to read you a statement and will be asking you to stand along a continuum to express your agreement or disagreement with what I've said. For example, if I said, 'all people should be kind' you would stand along the continuum to show your disagreement (demonstrate where they would stand) or agreement (demonstrate where they would stand.) You can stand anywhere along the continuum to show how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement. I'll give you a few seconds to think about each statement before asking you to move.*
- [Read the first statement and wait a few seconds.]

- Now move to stand along the continuum to show your level of agreement or disagreement with “[repeat statement].” [Pause while students locate themselves.]
- Turn and talk to a person or two who is close to you on the line. Why are you standing there? What experiences have you had that make you think or feel the way you do? [Allow for 2 minutes of sharing in small groups or pairs.]
- Now, let’s discuss together as a whole group—who will get us started? Let’s go from one end of the spectrum to the other, hearing from several people along the way. As you are listening to your peers share, think about how what they are saying impacts your own thinking. I will give you a chance to move later, if you would like to.
- [Call on student volunteers and ask them to explain their rationale for standing in their spot. Remain neutral about all responses, responding with “Thank you for sharing.” or a similarly unbiased comment.]
- For those who, after hearing these comments, would like to change your answer, please move now.
- How and why did your answer change? [Hear from volunteers if there are some who wish to share.]
- [Repeat the process above with each of the statements.]
- Thank you for sharing your ideas. Let’s sit down now.”

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 12 minutes

Attitudes & Expectations

Overview

Students will discuss their ideas around expectations, perfectionism, and growth mindset.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Society provides many ideas about what will bring happiness, not all of which are realistic.
- Having unrealistic expectations about happiness can cause us to be hard on ourselves in ways that are unhelpful.

Materials Required

- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Paper
- Notecards
- Writing utensils
- Discussion handout included at the end of this learning experience

Instructions

- Divide your group into pairs or trios. Give each group one sheet of paper or use the provided handout.
- Ask groups to brainstorm some things that society, the media, and advertising tell us that we need to be happy. [Some examples may be new cars, fame, wealth, good looks, great job, a particular body type.]

- Invite groups to share out as you write their ideas on chart paper or the whiteboard under the heading “What Society Tells Us Will Make Us Happy.”
- Then, ask students to look over the list and ask them:
 - *“Will these things bring us lasting happiness? How do you know?”*
 - *Is everybody who is [example: wealthy] happy?*
 - *Do you think if you had any or all of these things you would be happy? Why or why not?*
 - *Could any of these expectations people might have for themselves cause them problems?”*
- Let students guide this discussion.
- Ask students what may be meant by the term “expectation.” Write their ideas, along with a definition along the lines of “what someone predicts will happen” on the board.
- Next, give each student a notecard or post-it. Ask them to independently brainstorm what they want for themselves, that they think will bring them lasting happiness in the future.
- Invite students to share out as you record their ideas on chart paper or the whiteboard under the heading “What I Want that Will Help Me Be Happy.” (Or collect the post-its/notecards and display them on the chart.)
- Facilitate a group discussion using the following questions. You may want to display the questions in some way.
- Think of a time when you failed to meet your own expectations and you felt bad for yourself or treated yourself harshly. Imagine if a friend came to you and said the same thing about themselves. How would you help them take a different perspective on things?
- How does it feel when friends, family, and/or society have unrealistic or unhelpful expectations for you that you can’t or don’t want to live up to?
- How does it feel when friends, family, and/or society have realistic or helpful expectations for you that are in line with your own hopes and dreams for yourself?
- In your opinion, how are expectations and perfectionism (or wanting to be perfect) connected?
- In what ways does the way we feel about failure and making mistakes impact our behavior and growth?
- Tell them they are going to reflect on helpful and unhelpful expectations they have for themselves.
 - *“Helpful expectations help us grow and encourage us; unhelpful expectations cause us to be hard on ourselves and can contribute to negative feelings about ourselves.”*

Sample script

- *"Today we're going to think together about expectations, perfectionism, and growth mindset.*
- *We'll be working in our small groups, so please get yourselves resettled now in your group. [If you do not have designated small work groups already, do so now.]*
- *Using this handout, you'll be brainstorming some things that society, the media and advertising tell us that we need to be happy. Who can share an example to start? [Allow time for 1-2 examples.] Wonderful. Go ahead and work with your groups, listing as many examples as possible. Remember that everyone will be working toward equity of voice, so take note of your own contributions and those of others. [Provide time to work.]*
- *Now, let's share your group ideas with the class. I'll write them here under "What Society Tells Us Will Make Us Happy." [Allow each group to share some or all of their ideas.]*
- *Thanks for contributing all of these terrific ideas. Now let's look over the whole list. [Pause. Facilitate a discussion using the questions below. Allow students to guide the discussion.]*
- *Will these things bring us lasting happiness? How do you know?*
- *Is everybody who is [example: wealthy] happy?*
- *Do you think if you had any or all of these things you would be happy? Why or why not?*
- *Could any of these expectations people might have for themselves cause them problems?*
- *What do you think is meant by the term "expectation? [Write their ideas, along with a definition along the lines of "what someone predicts will happen" on the board.]*
- *Now I'm going to give you a notecard/post-it note. I invite you to brainstorm on your own what you want for yourself and what you think will bring you lasting happiness in the future. [Provide time for writing.]*
- *Who would like to share? [Record their thoughts on the poster or collect and display.]*
- *[Facilitate a group discussion using one or more of the following questions. You may want to display the questions in some way.]*
- *Think of a time when you failed to meet your own expectations and you felt bad for yourself or treated yourself harshly. [Pause.] Now, imagine if a friend came to you and said the same thing about themselves. How would you help them take a different perspective on things?*
- *How does it feel when friends, family, and/or society have unrealistic or unhelpful expectations for you that you can't or don't want to live up to?*
- *How does it feel when friends, family, and/or society have realistic or helpful expectations for you that are in line with your own hopes and dreams for yourself?*

- *In your opinion, how are expectations and perfectionism (or wanting to be perfect) connected?*
- *In what ways does the way we feel about failure and making mistakes impact our behavior and growth?*
- *Wonderful, thanks for a great discussion. Next we're going to do a reflective practice on expectations we have for ourselves. Helpful expectations help us grow and encourage us; unhelpful expectations cause us to be hard on ourselves and can contribute to negative feelings about ourselves."*

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 10 minutes

What to Expect of Myself

Overview

In this reflective practice, students examine expectations they have for themselves and how they may be helpful or unhelpful.

Content/Insights to be Explored

Having unrealistic expectations can cause us to be hard on ourselves and create negative feelings that can be unhelpful.

Materials Required

- One copy of the reflective practice handout for each student
- Writing utensils

Instructions

- Ask students to move out of their groups and work quietly on their own during this reflective practice.
- Show students the back of second handout "My Expectations for Myself." Model at least one helpful expectation and one unhelpful expectation for yourself. Tell students to work independently on this step, capturing their own ideas as they reflect on their personal expectations.
- Ask them to brainstorm their expectations for two minutes. Set a timer for this step.
- Invite students to select one helpful expectation and one unhelpful expectation from their brainstorm, and answer the questions on the worksheet in writing or drawing.
- Provide time to share for those who want to.

Sample script

- *"Please thank your group and move back to your personal work spot. [Pause as they relocate.] You will work on your own for the first part of this reflective practice and there will be time to share at the end.*
- *This is the reflective practice handout, "My Expectations for Myself." What you'll do here is think about some helpful and unhelpful expectations you have for yourself. This will be private writing, for your eyes only. You'll be invited to use the ideas from this reflection during our sharing time, but the writing is just for you.*

- For example, for me, under the heading “helpful expectations,” I might write, “I will try to get at least 15 minutes of exercise every day.” In the column under “unhelpful expectation,” I might write, “I will try to make everybody in my family get along all the time.”
- Who has questions?
- Go ahead and begin. We’ll do individual brainstorming for two minutes. Capture whatever ideas pop up for you, writing them in the column without judging the idea or yourself. Don’t move to the next section yet—give yourself time to see what surfaces during this private silent writing time. [Allow time for reflection and writing.]
- Next, select one expectation from each column and answer the questions on the handout for both of them. Again, this writing is your own. [Allow time for reflection and writing.]
- Take a moment to finish just the thought you’re writing right now. [Pause.] And then look over your ideas.” [Allow time for sharing.]
- What do you notice about your list of “unhelpful expectations?” What do the items on this list have in common, if anything? What impact might these “unhelpful expectations” be having on you?
- What do you notice about feelings or sensations that arise for you as you think carefully about these lists of expectations you’re holding for yourself today?”

DEBRIEF | 5 minutes

Share in partners and/or volunteers for the whole group, as appropriate to your group.

- “What do you notice about your list of “helpful expectations”? Do you see any themes or generalities? Do they seem doable?”

What society, the media, and advertising say will make us happy

What do I expect of myself?

Helpful Expectations help me grow and encourage me	Unhelpful Expectations cause me to be hard on myself and create negative feelings about myself

1. Select one unhelpful expectation you have for yourself and put a star by it.

Why is this expectation unhelpful for you?

What do you think might contribute to this unhelpful expectation?

What can you do to reduce this unhelpful expectation, or to begin thinking about it in a different way?

How might others help you to reduce or reframe this unhelpful expectation?

Who do you think could be helpful?

2. Select one helpful expectation you have for yourself and put a star by it.

What do you think this helpful expectation is based on?

Why is this expectation helpful for you?

What can you do to make this helpful expectation a reality for yourself?

How might others help you to make this helpful expectation a reality for yourself?

Who would be a helpful resource as you develop this helpful expectation more fully?

What would they do?

Exploring Forgiveness

PURPOSE

In this learning experience, students explore forgiveness as the letting go of anger and negative emotions towards oneself and others, without necessarily approving of the action that led to harm. Students then reflect

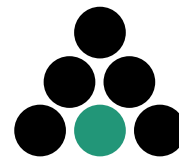
on experiences they may have had in which they let go of anger and negative emotions towards others and themselves.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Explore the concept of forgiveness as a releasing of negative emotions towards oneself or another person.
- Explore how seeing another person's behavior and emotions in context may help us understand that person and have compassion for them.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Compassion for Others

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Enough space for students to move around an imagined continuum line
- A sign that reads "Total Forgiveness" and one that reads "No Forgiveness" that can be placed on either end of a line (the line can be imaginary or can be created with colored tape on the floor)
- Drawing/writing utensils for each student

LENGTH

40 minutes

CHECK-IN | 3 minutes

- *“Let’s prepare for a short attention practice. How do we want our body to be?”*
- *First we’ll take a comfortable and upright posture. Then we’ll keep our eyes on the ground or close them.*
- *Before we strengthen our attention, we’ll do some resourcing or grounding to calm our bodies. Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let’s just bring our resource to mind. And let’s see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we’re going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s become aware of our breathing. Let’s see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back to your resource or grounding, or just take*

a small break, making sure not to disturb anyone else. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]

- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *You can strengthen your attention by focusing on sensations or by focusing on the breath. It’s your choice - it’s always up to you.*
- *What did you notice?” [Share aloud.]*

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 7 minutes

What is Forgiveness?

Overview

Students will explore the meaning of the word “forgive” using a word map and examples from their experience.

Content/Insights to be Explored

Forgiveness means letting go of the anger and negative emotions we hold towards ourselves and others.

Materials Required

None

Instructions

- Explain that today your class will explore forgiveness and what it means to forgive someone.
- Write the word “forgive” on the board.
- Ask: *“What does this word mean to you, or what are words that could be connected with*

“forgive?” Write these words around the word “forgive.”

- Give your own example of forgiveness, starting with something small, then ask if anyone can share a similar example of someone forgiving another person or being forgiven themselves. In your example, include the consequences of being forgiven or forgiving someone. Ask students to share some of their examples of forgiving or being forgiven.
- Explain there are two types of forgiveness. One is external: telling a person you forgive them and possibly could become friends again. Another is internal: letting go of anger and negative emotions towards yourself and others.
- Write these on the board along with your class’s ideas.
- Ask some or all of these questions:
 - *“When do you say you’re sorry or apologize? Have you ever said you’re sorry when you didn’t really mean it? Why?”*
 - *How do you know you have truly forgiven someone?*
 - *What do you need in order to forgive someone? What factors into forgiveness? [time, the act, the person, etc.]*
 - *How do you know when someone else wants to be forgiven?*
 - *If you forgive someone, does it mean that what they did was okay?*

- *Is forgiveness a choice?”*

- Mention how although it’s not always easy to forgive others, research shows that people who are able to let go of their angry feelings actually have a greater well-being themselves, and that truly being able to forgive has positive physical and emotional health benefits for the person who is doing the forgiving.

Teaching Tips

- If you choose to give examples of forgiveness, including examples from your own life, begin with very small things, such as minor inconveniences. Be sure to avoid any major transgressions. Start with forgiveness of another person, and lead up to self-forgiveness as the lesson progresses.
- Try to reinforce the ways people regularly forgive minor transgressions, rather than the times people are unable to forgive. This is a way to adopt a strengths-based approach, rather than a deficit-based approach.

Sample Script

- *“Today we’re going to learn more about forgiveness and what it means to forgive someone. [Write forgive on the board.]*
- *What do you think of when you hear the word forgive? What other words or ideas do you connect to “forgive”?*
- *There are two types of forgiveness—external and internal. External is about others, telling someone you forgive them and really meaning it. Internal is about ourselves, and being able*

to let go of anger and negative emotions about something.

- *Here's an example of forgiveness from my own life... [Share your example here.] As a result of this forgiveness...[Share the consequences of the forgiveness.]*
- *Does anyone have a story about forgiving someone else? Or about being forgiven? And what happened after? Before you share, think about how you'll frame the story, according to our agreements about not naming names, but rather describing a situation in a way that helps us understand what happened but not revealing personal information. [Pause. Invite student input.]*
- *What do you need in order to forgive? How does time factor into forgiveness?*
- *When do you say you're sorry or apologize? Have you ever said you're sorry when you didn't really mean it? Why?*
- *Is forgiveness a choice? Why or why not?"*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 20 minutes

The Forgiveness Continuum

Overview

Students will hear different scenarios and then will stand on a continuum to indicate how much forgiveness they might feel in such a situation. They will be invited to share their reasons for standing where they are, and then given the opportunity to move on the continuum when they hear more information about the scenario.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Forgiveness means letting go of the anger and negative emotions we hold towards ourselves and others.
- Awareness can make it easier to forgive when we learn new information and see a situation in a broader context.

Materials Required

- Enough space for students to move around an imagined continuum line
- A sign that reads "Total Forgiveness" and one that reads "No Forgiveness" that can be placed on either end of a line (the line can be imaginary or can be created with colored tape on the floor)

Instructions

- Create a continuum on the floor, with one end marked "Total Forgiveness" and the other end marked "No Forgiveness."
- Explain that you will read a prompt, and then each student should step to a place on the continuum that most accurately reflects the amount of forgiveness they feel for the following prompts. After that you will invite them to volunteer to share why they chose to stand where they are. Then you will give additional information (using the follow-up prompts under each main prompt) and they can move. They can also move if they hear something shared by another student that makes them feel differently.

- Read one of the prompts below. Ask students to take a place on the line and invite sharing.
- Read one of the extension prompts, and invite students to move if they wish to. These give more information about the situation. Again invite students to share, then use the questions provided after the follow-up prompt.
- Conclude the activity's discussion with these questions:
 - *"Why did we sometimes move as we learned more information?*
[Understanding the context makes it easier or harder to forgive.]
 - *When did we want to forgive?*
 - *In what ways might forgiveness benefit us?*
 - *How do we learn to forgive?"*

Teaching Tips

It's good to ask clarifying questions to invite your students into deeper reflection. Remember that there are no "right" or "wrong" responses to the prompts, however. Your intention is to invite dialogue, not to tell them how they should be thinking or feeling. You can be a neutral listener during the activity to allow for differences of opinion, and to create a safe space for this, and future, conversations.

Scenarios

- You are waiting to be picked for a team game and a student new to your school keeps jokingly picking on you in front of everyone, saying you're no good and will be the last to be chosen.
 - You find out this new student was teased last year and that's why they changed schools.
 - What would you need to move toward forgiveness at this point?
 - What if you don't get what you want/need (apology, etc.)? What might happen?
- At lunch your close friend loses their temper and yells at you in front of everyone in the cafeteria.
 - You find out that this friend got a very low grade on a test that morning.
 - Later, they apologized.
 - What would you need to move toward forgiveness at this point?
 - What if you don't get what you want/need (apology, etc.)? What might happen?
- Everyone in your class got invited to a party on Friday, but you didn't get an invitation.
 - You find an invitation in your backpack on Sunday.
 - Your best friend asked why you weren't at the party and tells you they put the invitation in your backpack for you.
 - What would you need to move toward forgiveness at this point?

- What if you don't get what you want/need (apology, etc.)? What might happen?
- You lend your watch to a friend, but they lose it. Instead of apologizing, they just act like it's no big deal.
 - You find out that they lent it to another friend, who lost it.
 - You find out that they've lost many items given to them by friends in the past.
 - What would you need to move toward forgiveness at this point?
 - What if you don't get what you want/need (apology, etc.)? What might happen?
- A teacher uses sarcasm and belittling language when asking, in front of the whole class, why your project wasn't finished on time.
- The teacher apologizes to you privately, saying there was no excuse for their behavior and saying they feel badly about embarrassing you.
 - What would you need to move toward forgiveness at this point?
 - What if you don't get what you want/need (apology, etc.)? What might happen?
- The teacher apologizes to you, very sincerely, in front of the class, saying there was no excuse for treating you, or anyone else, that way and saying they're working

on never speaking to another student like that again.

- What would you need to move toward forgiveness at this point?
- What if you don't get what you want/need (apology, etc.)? What might happen?

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 7 minutes

Recalling a Time of Forgiveness

Overview

Students will draw and/or journal about a time when they witnessed forgiveness, either in their own life or in someone else's. They then do resourcing and tracking to notice sensations in their bodies and emotions when thinking about this act of forgiveness.

Content/Insights to be Explored

We can recall moments of forgiveness, and doing so can have an effect on our minds and bodies.

Materials Required

- Paper
- Drawing/writing utensils for each student

Instructions

- Start with a brief grounding exercise of 1 to 2 minutes to settle yourself and your students.
- Ask your students to take a moment (30-60 seconds) to silently recall a time when they witnessed forgiveness, either in their own life or in someone else's.

- If they cannot think of something in their own life, they can think of something they read in a book or saw in a movie, or they can imagine a moment of forgiveness.
 - Ask them to draw or write about the moment they recalled or imagined.
 - After 3-4 minutes of drawing, ask them to pause, and look at the image they drew or words they wrote.
 - Ask: *"What sensations or feelings do you notice on the inside, as you look at your moment of forgiveness?"*
 - Allow for voluntary sharing.
-

DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- *"How would you explain forgiveness to someone who didn't know what it was?"*
- *What might it be like or how might it feel if we were more forgiving to each other?"*

Exploring Active Compassion

PURPOSE

In this learning experience students will explore more deeply the concept of active compassion, which involves taking responsibility for another and acting to protect them. Through discussion of a few scenarios, they will explore three main

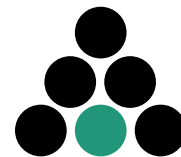
components of active compassion: having affection for someone, understanding their needs and wants, and taking responsibility to help them. They will also explore how active compassion can involve saying no and setting boundaries.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Explore three components of active compassion: affection for someone, understanding their needs and wants, and taking responsibility to help them.
- Explore how compassion sometimes requires saying no or standing up to someone.
- Recognize the difference between being assertive and being aggressive, mean, or unkind.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Compassion for Others

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Notecards
- Blank paper
- Writing tools
- Insight Activity Handout

LENGTH

35 minutes

CHECK-IN | 3 minutes

- *“Let’s prepare for a short attention practice. How do we want our body to be?”*
- *First we’ll take a comfortable and upright posture. Then we’ll keep our eyes on the ground or close them.*
- *Before we strengthen our attention, we’ll do some resourcing or grounding to calm our bodies. Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let’s just bring our resource to mind. And let’s see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we’re going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s become aware of our breathing. Let’s see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back to your resource or grounding, or just take*

a small break, making sure not to disturb anyone else. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]

- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *You can strengthen your attention by focusing on sensations or by focusing on the breath. It’s your choice - it’s always up to you.*
- *What did you notice?” [Share aloud.]*

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 5 minutes

What is Active Compassion?

Overview

Using personal examples, students explore how compassion is about looking out for others and doing what is best for them, not just saying yes or giving people what they want without thinking about whether it is good for them.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Explore the meaning of active compassion: thinking about what is best for another person and having a sense of personal responsibility for their welfare, even when it requires actions that are difficult.
- Explore how active compassion sometimes requires standing up to or for another person, including saying no or setting boundaries.

Materials Required

- Markers
- Whiteboard/chart paper

Instructions

- Review with students what “empathy” and “compassion” mean. Tell them you are going to talk about “active compassion” today.
- Write “active compassion” on the whiteboard or chart paper. Ask what the word “active” could mean in this context.
- Explain to students that active compassion is a term used to refer to a strong kind of compassion that involves taking personal responsibility for another person. Because it drives one to take personal action for others’ well-being, it is called “active.” Active compassion can be difficult—it doesn’t just mean saying yes or giving people what they want without thinking about whether it is good for them. You can write a version of this definition on the board if you like.
- Ask students if anyone can think of an example of a time when they themselves did something that involved standing up to or for someone else and did what was best for them. If no one volunteers to start, you can offer the first example. Record their examples around the phrase “active compassion” on the board.
- Next, ask students if they can think of an example when someone else did something that helped keep them safe, and did what was best for them, even if it was difficult.
- Tell them that you are going to do an activity with compassionate acts and role play.

Teaching Tip

It can be helpful to give an example that differentiates active compassion from empathy or weaker forms of compassion that do not lead to taking personal responsibility to act on behalf of another. An ancient Indian story tells of a boy who fell into a pit while his family was out walking in the woods. While the various relatives stood by crying and showing great concern for his well-being, the boy’s father jumped into the pit and saved him. The other relatives could empathize with the boy, but the boy’s father felt active compassion.

Sample script

- *“Today we’re going to talk about some more about compassion. Who can remind us what compassion means?”*
- *Yes, it means being kind and also wanting to keep others and oneself safe from harm.*
- *When people talk about empathy and compassion they talk about different levels of intensity. One can feel empathy or compassion on a very mild level. You see someone suffering and think, “Oh, that’s too bad.” You empathize with them, but you’re not going to do anything about it yourself.*
- *This is not active compassion, because it doesn’t compel you to take action. You’re not stepping up for the other person. You’re not really willing to inconvenience yourself for that person.*
- *When compassion is really strong, it’s called “active compassion.”*

- *When someone has this type of compassion, they're going to do something. They want to do something. They're going to take action on the other person's behalf. In fact, they might not let anything get in their way from helping the person or people who need their help.*
- *This active compassion is very strong. It's about keeping others safe and free from danger and doing what's best for them, even when it's hard.*
- *It's about doing what's best, not just saying yes or giving people what they want. What gives a person the strength to do this, is that they genuinely care about the other person. It's not about themselves, it's about the person they care for.*
- *Can anyone think of an example of a time when they had active compassion for someone? Or when you saw someone have active compassion? [Write student examples on the board.]*
- *If you can't think of a time when you saw this in your own life, can you think of a time when you saw it in a film or a book? Or can you imagine an instance of active compassion?*
- *Thanks for sharing your ideas. Next we're going to do an activity where we come up with examples of active compassion that we can act out together."*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 17 minutes

Practicing Active Compassion through Role Play

Overview

In this activity, students will come up with their own scenarios and practice what it feels like to say "no" to someone with compassion and kindness and what it feels like to hear that from someone else.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Explore how compassion sometimes requires saying no or standing up to someone.
- Recognize the difference between being assertive and being mean or unkind.

Materials Required

- Notecards
- Writing tools
- Insight Activity Handout

Instructions

- Tell students that they are going to work on scenarios of active compassion to share with the class.
- Ask students:
 - *"What does it mean to help someone or keep them safe? [Allow time for sharing.]*
 - *If you saw a smaller child playing near the fire and you tell them to stop, or take them away from the fire, you are keeping them from getting hurt. You're not doing it to be mean, but to be kind."*

- Divide your class into groups of 3-4 and give them the insight activity handout (provided).
- Give students about 7 minutes to plan their scenario using the handout as their guide. Circulate to hear their ideas and help them be ready to present.
- Have each group present their scenarios. Follow each presentation with the discussion questions below.

Teaching Tips

If there's not enough time for every group to present their role-play and debrief, extend the lesson to a second session in close proximity to this one.

Discussion Questions for Each Scenario

- What physical or emotional danger (or concern) was present in this situation?
- What is a brave yet safe action that you could take by yourself in a situation like this?
- What are other actions that you could do, or other ways you could help provide what is needed?

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 8 minutes

Remembering Active Compassion

Overview

Students will take a moment to think of and draw or write about an example of active compassion from their own life or an imagined one.

Content/Insights to be Explored

Explore how active compassion involves recognizing the needs of another and taking responsibility to help and protect them.

Materials Required

- Paper
- Drawing utensils for each student

Sample script

- *"We just examined some scenarios in which characters took action that was compassionate, to stand up for someone or help them.*
- *Let's take a moment to think if anything has happened in our life that is like that.*
- *What does it mean to protect someone or keep them safe? If you saw a smaller child playing near the fire and you tell them to stop, or take them away from the fire, you are keeping them from getting hurt. You're not doing it to be mean, but to be kind.*
- *Can anyone think of other examples? Can you think of a time when you watched over someone or someone protected you?*
- *Maybe you cared for an animal or pet, and you had to keep them safe by keeping them indoors or in a special place. Maybe you have cared for a family member like a brother or sister, or a friend. [Ask for examples.]*
- *Let's now take a moment to sit quietly and think of a time when we watched over someone else, or someone else watched*

over us. You can close your eyes if you like.

[Pause for 30-60 seconds.]

- *Now let's draw what we remembered or thought of. If you couldn't think of a time from your own life, you can think back in history, or our current times, or you can imagine something. Or you can draw one of the scenarios that we just talked about. Our drawings are going to show a person helping and standing up for another person.*
- [Allow time for drawing. Share out after drawing.]
- *What does it feel like inside when we think of being kept safe? Does anyone notice any sensations connected to those feelings?"*

DEBRIEF | 2 minutes

- *"Why might it be important for us to keep each other safe from harm?"*
- *Can you think of a time when you were upset because someone said no to you, but later you realized they were being compassionate and trying to keep you safe?*
- *What have you learned or thought about today that you'd like to remember?"*

Insight Activity:
Acting Out Active Compassion

Group Names _____

Instructions:

1. Select which type of active compassion your group would like to explore. If you select "Other," speak to your teacher about your idea.
2. Plan out your scenario below by answering the questions below. Make sure every member of your group has a role to play.
3. Act your scenario out for the class. Be prepared to help the class understand what was "behind" this active compassion, what helped the person showing active compassion be brave and strong enough to do what they did.

Active Compassion Scenario Subjects		
Saying No	Creating a Boundary	Standing Up for Someone
Standing Up for Something		Keeping Someone Safe
Other:		

What is the background or context leading up to the active compassion?

What is the compassionate act?

Describe your characters:

Character	Needs of this Character in this Scenario	Emotions and Beliefs of this Character in the Scenario

MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 7

We're All in This Together

Overview

As leading systems-thinking scholar Peter Senge notes in *The Triple Focus*, “Our innate systems intelligence, just like our innate capacities to understand self and other, needs to be cultivated.”¹ In our increasingly complex world, care and compassion alone are insufficient to ensure effective ethical engagement. Rather, good intentions must be complemented with responsible decision-making that is based on an understanding of the wider systems within which we live. Students must be prepared to grapple with issues of complexity so they can better understand the world around them, and better engage with and within it.

Chapter 7 of the curriculum focuses on systems and systems thinking. These are not entirely new topics, having been introduced throughout the curriculum. In Chapter 1, students drew an interdependence web, showing how many things are connected to a single item or event. In Chapters 3 and 4, they explored how emotions arise from causes and within a context, and that a spark can escalate into a forest fire, affecting everything around it. Systems thinking is built into the entire curriculum, but in this chapter it is approached directly and explicitly.

What is Systems Thinking?

SEE Learning defines systems thinking as: “The ability to understand how persons, objects, and events exist interdependently with other persons, objects, and events, in complex networks of causality.”

While this may sound complicated, children have an innate capacity for systems thinking. Although they may not use the term “system,” they have an intuitive understanding that their family or home environment is a complex unit with specific dynamics. Not everyone in a family or classroom likes the same things or acts the same way; and changing one thing in these systems can affect everyone. In adolescence, as group peer relationships become even more important, students increasingly experience the complexities of group dynamics. It is therefore a perfect time to build on their innate intelligence and help them cultivate new ways of understanding and approaching such dynamics.

A system is something that has parts that are interrelated. It is complex, meaning that it cannot be reduced to just a single process, and it is dynamic, meaning the parts are continually changing and even the rules of the entire system can change over time. Systems can be physical (such as a weather system) and/or social (a group of people). The human body, therefore, is a good example of a system, as is our ecosystem. A heap of laundry piled on the floor does not appear to us to be a system, because its parts don’t seem related to each other in any clear way.

¹ Goleman and Senge, *Triple Focus*.

Interestingly, however, systems thinking does not mean a type of thinking that only applies to a subset of things we might call “systems.” It is rather a type of thinking that can be applied to anything, including any object, process, or event. This is because it is an approach to thinking about the idea of interrelationships. Its distinctive feature is that it approaches things not as isolated, static entities, but as interactive, dynamic entities within context—that is, as interdependent parts of larger, complex wholes. From this perspective, we can see that a heap of laundry can in fact function as a system, such as when the moisture of one soggy piece of clothing begins to seep into the other pieces, and mold then begins to grow and spread throughout the whole pile. The opposite of systems thinking is thinking about things as if they were static, independent, unconnected, and unrelated to anything beyond themselves.

A systems thinker is a holistic thinker, who anticipates unintended consequences and considers the impact of their behavior on others, rather than just themselves. The Waters Foundation notes these habits of mind that characterize “systems thinkers”:²

- Seeking to understand the big picture
- Seeing patterns/trends in systems
- Recognizing how a system’s structure causes its behavior
- Identifying cause and effect relationships
- Surfacing and testing assumptions
- Finding where unintended consequences might arise
- Finding leverage points to change a system
- Resisting making quick conclusions

Being able to engage in the process of this type of thinking intentionally—and becoming more skillful at it—is the intention behind including systems thinking in SEE Learning. This doesn’t always have to be through explicit teaching about systems. As Daniel Goleman and Peter Senge point out, systems thinking skills can be cultivated through traditionally engaging pedagogy such as having students work and learn together; by keeping the focus on action and thinking together; and by facilitating opportunities for students to learn from each other.³ Again, you will note that these are all principles built into each chapter of the SEE Learning curriculum. Your students arrive at this chapter already having cultivated some systems-thinking skills, and will now benefit from a deeper exploration.

² Waters Foundation, *Systems Thinking in Schools* (2014).

³ Goleman and Senge, *Triple Focus*.

Systems Thinking and Ethical Engagement

Sometimes students are taught to analyze systems without a clear connection being made to basic human values and ethical engagement. In SEE Learning, however, one of the important reasons to include systems thinking is because it is an essential part of ethical and responsible decision-making. If decisions are repeatedly made without thinking about the longer-term consequences for oneself and others, they are far less likely to be responsible and beneficial. In SEE Learning, ethics is not presented as a set of mandates from an authority. Rather, students are encouraged to cultivate discernment about their decisions and the impact those decisions have on themselves and others. Systems thinking becomes especially powerful and relevant when it is combined with empathy and concern for all involved, as well as a recognition of our common humanity. It helps empower students to know that their choices and actions matter, and can have impact beyond their immediate circle.

Systems thinking can be transformative. Students may find that prior to engaging in systems thinking in the learning experiences here, they took many things for granted or perceived things in a very different way. They may not have realized a fraction of the ways people have supported and cared for them; they may not have taken the time to see the many ways different groups of people contribute to their school. Deep engagement with systems thinking can bring about profound shifts in perspective, as problems and situations that appeared one way in isolation take on a different look altogether when viewed within a broader context. In turn, these new perspectives can bring about new emotions and feelings, including a greater sense of connection with others, gratitude, respect, understanding, patience, and even forgiveness. Allow the time and the opportunities for this way of thinking to develop. If approached in this way, systems thinking and the cultivation of ethical intelligence and basic human values can go hand-in-hand, bringing about critical insights and then deepening them into embodied understanding.

The Learning Experiences

Learning experience 1, “It Takes a Village,” returns to the idea of interdependence, first explored in Chapter 1, which is central for understanding systems. By using the example of a child their age, students identify the many forms of care and support a child needs from others to arrive at their current age. Recognizing the value and care that one has received and still receives on a daily basis can help students realize that they are not alone, that they are valued, and that they can be confident in moving forward knowing that others are supporting them. It also shows that all individuals live within and are shaped by a systems context.

In learning experience 2, students learn about feedback loops through a simple story. A feedback loop is a circular process that keeps getting stronger and building on itself unless some internal or external change breaks the cycle. In the example story, two students act unkindly towards each other, starting a negative feedback loop. Later in the story, two students act kindly towards each other, starting a positive feedback loop.

Learning experience 3 introduces students to the terms “system” and “systems thinking.” Students are provided with a simple “Systems Thinking Checklist” that can be used to approach any person, object, or event through a systems-thinking lens. They then analyze their school as a system, looking for feedback loops, and explore how changes to the school could result in intended and unintended consequences for all.

In learning experience 4, students explore a deeper way of looking at events, by analyzing how they rest upon systemic structures. Often an action (such as someone being rude or failing a test) is not understood within a larger context; rather, it is merely ascribed to a perceived pattern of behavior (being rude in general or not studying enough). Using the image of an iceberg, students are taught to go deeper in their analysis. They learn to look for deeper systemic structures—both internal and external—that reinforce the patterns of behaviors that contribute to individual events. Addressing these deeper systemic structures can help young people understand events and patterns of behavior better, and provide insights that help them to take more effective action in changing such patterns.

These learning experiences cover some of the basic concepts and approaches of systems thinking, and lay the foundation for the final Capstone Project, which reinforces their learning and allows them to put it into practice around a particular issue that is of value to them.

Student Personal Practice

Once students learn how to notice feedback loops, systems, and systemic structures—and to map them using interdependence drawings—they can use this skill again and again, finding new applications. These strategies can also be used when teaching history, social studies, science, and other subjects. Encourage your students to look for systems and connections in their studies and in their lives. This can start with encouraging them to do interdependence drawings and drawings of feedback loops for things they are interested in. This sustained practice will help them gain ever increasing familiarity with this type of thinking.

Teacher Personal Practice

Your ability to encourage the innate systems thinking abilities of your students will be stronger the more you engage with systems thinking yourself. You are encouraged to regularly reflect on the concepts in this chapter.

Sometimes when we think about the systems we live in, especially systemic structures, we may feel disempowered, because we don't feel like we can change the whole system. This can happen especially if we start by thinking of the very large-scale systems we live in, where it seems our individual actions can have little impact. You are encouraged to start with looking for very small examples of systems and feedback loops—in a family, a relationship with a friend, or in your classroom. What systems and feedback loops can you identify in these areas? What happens when you try to introduce a change into a feedback loop, or shift a negative feedback loop to a positive one? If you feel frustrated that your first experiments do not yield immediate results, remind yourself to take heart and that you will build this “muscle” over time.

Similarly, you can look for small instances of interdependence. Can you think of a time when something that started very small led to a change for the better in your life? You can experiment and see what happens if you make some small improvement or change in your home life, in your classroom, or in your school. After making the change, watch for and reflect on any positive consequences, days or weeks later.

Further resources for engaging in systems thinking can be found in the online SEE Learning educator preparation platform.

Further Reading and Resources

- *The Triple Focus: A New Approach to Education*, by Daniel Goleman and Peter Senge (More Than Sound, 2014).
- *The Habit-Forming Guide to Becoming a Systems Thinker* by Tracy Benson and Sheri Marlin (Systems Thinking Group Inc., 2017).

Parent/Caregiver Information Letter



Date: _____

Dear Parent or Caregiver,

This letter is to inform you that your child is now starting **SEE Learning, Chapter 7, "Building a Better World."**

In Chapter 7, your child will focus on systems and systems thinking. A system is something that has parts, and its parts are connected to each other, such that if we change one part, we affect other parts or even the whole system. Fundamentally, Systems Thinking is about the relationships between things. Although they may not use the term "system," they already have an understanding that their family or home environment is complex unit of relationships.

Home Practice

Your child will be learning a simple way of approaching systems using a checklist. Consider helping your child develop their systems thinking by using this checklist.

Systems Checklist:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Does it have parts and what are they? | <input type="checkbox"/> Are the parts connected to each other? How? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> If we change one part, does it change other parts? How? | <input type="checkbox"/> Are the parts connected to other things on the outside? How? |

Earlier chapters included

- Chapter 1 explored the concepts of kindness and happiness.
- Chapter 2 explored the important role that our bodies, and in particular our nervous system, play in our happiness and well-being.
- Chapter 3 addressed the topic of attention: why it is important, how to strengthen it, and how we can use it to cultivate insight into ourselves.
- Chapter 4 explored the topic of emotions, how they arise, and how to better "navigate them."
- Chapter 5 addressed appreciating differences, recognizing our shared common humanity and the practice of mindful listening.
- Chapter 6 explored the concepts and skills related to positive self-talk, forgiveness, self-compassion and compassion for others.

Further Reading and Resources

Remember that the SEE Learning Framework, contained within the *SEE Learning Companion*, contains an explanation of the entire curriculum. You may access it on the web at: www.compassion.emory.edu.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.



Center for
Contemplative Science and
Compassion-Based Ethics

EMORY UNIVERSITY

Teacher/Educator Signature

Teacher/Educator Printed Name: _____

Teacher/Educator Contact Info: _____

It Takes a Village

PURPOSE

By using the example of a child their age, and identifying the many forms of care and support a child needs from others to arrive at their current age, students will explore interdependence, a vital aspect of systems thinking: the help of family and caregivers, teachers, members of the community, friends, and strangers. In doing so, they

will come to see the multitude of ways they have received care and support from others. Recognizing the value and care that one has received and that one still receives on a daily basis helps students realize that they are not alone, that they are valued, and that they can be confident in their future, knowing that others are supporting them.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Enumerate the many acts of kindness, care, and support a child receives while growing up.
- Explore interdependence and systems thinking by examining how an individual depends on and can be affected by many members of a community (the system).
- Identify the ways in which they have been cared for throughout their lives, recognizing the number of people that contribute to their well-being.

LENGTH

35 minutes

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Appreciating Interdependence

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Large sheets of paper
- Markers
- Writing utensils
- A sheet of paper for each of the four age levels: pregnancy, baby-2 years, 3-5 years, 6-10 years (enough for as many groups of 2-3 that you will have)

CHECK-IN | 3 minutes

- *“Let’s prepare for a short attention practice. How do we want our body to be?”*
- *First we’ll take a comfortable and upright posture. Then we’ll keep our eyes on the ground or close them.*
- *Before we strengthen our attention, we’ll do some resourcing or grounding to calm our bodies. Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let’s just bring our resource to mind. And let’s see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we’re going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s become aware of our breathing. Let’s see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back to your resource or grounding, or just take*

a small break, making sure not to disturb anyone else. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]

- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *You can strengthen your attention by focusing on sensations or by focusing on the breath. It’s your choice - it’s always up to you.*
- *What did you notice?” [Share aloud.]*

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 4 minutes

What is Caring and How Have We Experienced It?

Overview

In this discussion, students will talk about what “care” means, concrete examples of things they have cared for, and people who have cared for them.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We tend to care for people and things that we find valuable.
- We need the care of others to grow up and survive.

Materials Required

None

Instructions

- Using a few concrete examples, discuss the meaning of care. The sample script below provides discussion questions you may ask.

Teaching Tips

Allow students to guide this discussion.

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 15 minutes

Overview

This insight activity offers students the opportunity to explore how many people care for a child for that child to reach the age of 14 (or choose the age that most of your students are) and the many ways they care for that child.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- It takes a great deal of care from many people to raise each single child.
- Everyone has received countless instances of care from many others throughout their life.
- Recognizing the care we've received can affect the way we feel about others and ourselves.
- Much of this care is not given in order to receive something back in return.

Materials Required

- A sheet of paper for each of the four age levels: pregnancy, baby-2 years, 3-5 years, 6-10 years (enough for as many groups of 2-3 that you will have)
- A large sheet of paper or the whiteboard labeled age level 11-14 years with a child of that age drawn in the center

Instructions

- Divide students into groups of 2 or 3. Give each group one age-level sheet. It's ok if more than one group has the same age level.
- Ask each group to draw a child of that age in the center of the page. Remember, a perfect drawing is not the point here - simply creating a quick representation of a child to help personalize the information is the point.
- Next, ask each group to write or draw all the people that care for a child at that age level.
- Then, ask students to write the kinds of care or support next to each person, what they provide to help the child survive, thrive, and be healthy and happy. Write and draw all the things needed for the child to be provided for, protected, fed, clothed, and cared for and allowed to flourish.
- As they are working on their group sheet, select groups one at a time to take turns coming up to the large sheet or whiteboard with the label age 11-14 years and contribute to this age level in the same way they are with their own poster.
- Once each group has completed their age level sheet and also contributed to the 11-14 age level brainstorm, begin the whole group share.
- Ask the groups that focused on "pregnancy" to begin. One group can share and the other groups that had that age level can agree with and add to what the first group presents.

Continue with the remaining age levels in order. You can present the 11-14 years age level. Allow students to add more ideas to this one as well.

- Ask the whole group what observations they have at this point. Did anything surprise them? What seems especially important to note?
- If it does not come up, ask: What is expected back in return from the child for all of this care?
- Tell students that it is the joy and responsibility of the adults to create a caring environment for the child. True, not every child experiences this in the same ways, or as fully or easily as every other child. But the adults in every child's life love and care for them, the best they can.
- If you have time, discuss the "It Takes a Village" learning experience title with the group.

Teaching Tips

- Keep in mind that among the caring experiences your students have had growing up, some will be universally shared as basic necessities (being fed, clothed, and cared for, etc.) and some not be universally shared (receiving presents, having both parents around, having access to a loving extended family, having a stable income or consistent housing). Some of your students will have experienced separations from family members or other difficult circumstances. This lesson should not be about comparing how some

students received more care than others, but rather highlights the basic care that anyone would have had to receive to reach their current age. Try to keep the focus on appreciating that which was received. If difficult emotions arise, always remember that you can use the resilience skills of resourcing, grounding, and Help Now! with your students at any time.

- Drawing may take more time than writing; if you are short on time, have students begin with words and add illustrations as time allows. Balance this observation with your own context, and the needs of Second Language Learners, Special Education students, and others who may feel more confident sharing ideas through art than writing when time is limited. Use the same support strategies you generally employ for your students, helping to caption drawings or partnering students for mutual benefit.
- The whole class share can be done as a gallery walk if you have time and space. In this case you would ask students to tape their sheets of paper on the classroom wall or along a hallway adjacent to your classroom, and then ask students to walk around and take a look at the completed sheets. If they think of something they'd like to add to these sheets, they may do so with sticky notes, adding comments, questions, or compliments to other students' posters.

Sample script

Have these steps posted on the board, visible to all once the group work begins.

- *"Your group will be given a sheet of paper with a child's age level noted on it. Everyone in the group will contribute to your poster. The first step will be to draw a simple picture of a baby or child at that age in the center of the paper. Leave room for the words that will be added around this picture.*
- *Next, you'll think of all the people who provide some kind of care for a child at this age level. Draw the people and label who those people are.*
- *Then, write and draw all the things and experiences you can think of that are needed for the child to be provided for, protected, fed, clothed, and cared for, thinking specifically about the kinds of care or support that each of those people provides in order for the baby or child to survive, thrive, and be healthy and happy. What do they do? I'll check in with you in about 8 minutes, to see how much longer we need. Work together to be sure all voices are heard, all ideas are valued, and that everyone in your group can point to their visible contributions to your poster.*
- *[As students are working, visit each group and ask them also to come up to the 11-14 year old paper and make some notes on it to create a parallel document to the ones each group is making.]*
- *Let's take a look at what you have come up with. [Each group shares verbally or through a gallery walk.]*
- *Let's see what we have on the 11-14 year old sheet. [Read the responses aloud]. What else we can add?*
- *What is expected back in return from the child for all of this care?*
- *Nothing, from the baby and the child. It is the joy and responsibility of the adults to create a caring environment for the child. True, not every child experiences this in the same ways, or perhaps as fully or easily as every other child. But the adults in every child's life love and care for them, the best they can. And as each child matures and grows, they too begin to find joy in contributing to their home and in being in relationship with those who care for them."*

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 10 minutes

Overview

In this reflective practices, students will make the previous activity more personal. Here, they write or draw to enumerate all of the people who have been involved in caring for them over their whole life. They will come up with the ways they have been cared for by these people. They will notice what sensations they have in their bodies while they do this and then will have the opportunity to share.

Content/Insights to be Explored

It has taken a great deal of care from many people to help keep me alive, healthy, and happy.

Materials Required

- Access to the age-level posters made by all of the small groups
- Paper and writing utensils for each student

Instructions

Use the script below to facilitate the reflective practice.

Sample script

- *"In the center of your sheet of paper, write your name and/or draw a picture that represents you.*
- *Around this, you'll write (or draw) all of the people in your life who have cared for you.*
- *When you think you have listed them all, see if you can think again, and remember one or two more people to add. Have a look at our class's work for additional ideas.*
- *Next to each person, you'll write the kind of care or support they provided or still provide for you. Just words and phrases are fine; sentences aren't necessary. I'll put on some music while you work for a few minutes on this reflection activity.*
- *[As time draws to a close...] Consider how many people provided care for you today (or yesterday). How many people have provided*

care for you in your whole life... This is your system of care.

- *How did it feel in your body while you did this reflection? Did you notice any pleasant or neutral sensations?*
- *On your paper, circle or put a star next to any kinds of care that you wrote down that you hadn't recognized fully before you did this activity.*
- *What would you like to share with the group about your reflection? Do any realizations or ideas come to mind? [If at all possible, precede this whole group sharing invitation with a brief TTYP—turn to your partner—conversation so that all voices are heard.]*
- *What are some benefits to taking the time to recognize the care we've received and acknowledge it?" [Allow time for sharing.]*

DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- *"Did thinking about the countless ways we've received care shift your perspective in any way or lead to a new way of seeing things?*
- *Why might it be important to remember how we have been, and are being, cared for?"*

Exploring Feedback Loops

PURPOSE

In this learning experience, students learn what a feedback loop is through a story. A feedback loop is a circular process that continues and keeps getting stronger unless some internal or external change breaks the cycle. Students explore positive feedback loops (with positive outcomes

that strengthen the positive cycle) such as kind actions reciprocated between two people, as well as negative feedback loops, (with negative outcomes that strengthen the negative cycle) such as meanness between two people that escalates.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Recognize feedback loops, both positive and negative.
- Explore how kindness and meanness can lead to positive and negative feedback loops.
- Identify ways to change negative feedback loops into positive ones.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Appreciating Interdependence

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- The Talent Show story
- Markers
- Whiteboard/chart paper
- Paper
- Markers or crayons for drawing

LENGTH

30 minutes

CHECK-IN | 3 minutes

- *“Let’s prepare for a short attention practice. How do we want our body to be?”*
- *First we’ll take a comfortable and upright posture. Then we’ll keep our eyes on the ground or close them.*
- *Before we strengthen our attention, we’ll do some resourcing or grounding to calm our bodies. Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let’s just bring our resource to mind. And let’s see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we’re going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s become aware of our breathing. Let’s see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back to your resource or grounding, or just take*

a small break, making sure not to disturb anyone else. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]

- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *You can strengthen your attention by focusing on sensations or by focusing on the breath. It’s your choice - it’s always up to you.*
- *Now let’s end the practice and open our eyes. What did you notice?” [Share aloud.]*

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 14 minutes

Feedback Loops

Overview

In this presentation and discussion, students learn about positive and negative feedback loops through a story about two students who act unkindly and kindly towards one another. Through comparing the characters’ actions and responses, students explore how feedback loops can be strengthened by the choices one makes.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- A feedback loop is a reinforcing cycle; it will continue with increasing intensity until something or someone stops it or changes its course.
- Feedback loops can be positive or negative.
- Kindness and meanness can lead to positive and negative feedback loops.

Materials Required

- The Talent Show Story, Parts I & II (included)
- Markers
- Board/chart paper

Instructions

- Tell students you will be reading a very short story, and you will be asking them how they think it will end.
- Read The Talent Show Part 1. End with the question, “How is Teddy likely to respond to this insult from Alice?” Take a few responses from students.
- Ask students what Teddy and Alice might do or say, if they were to continue responding to one another out of hurt feelings.
- Explain that you’re going to create a drawing to depict what happened in the story, and what might happen next. On the board or large chart paper, draw a diagram of a feedback loop like the one provided at the end of this learning experience.
- As you draw the feedback loop, ask the students to help fill in the feelings and actions of Alice and Teddy as the cycle continues. Use the provided questions, and write the feelings and actions of each character into the loop.

Negative Feedback Loop Questions

- *“How might Alice have been feeling when she entered class?”*

- *When Teddy insulted Alice how might she have felt then?*
- *What happened next?*
- *How do you think Teddy might have been feeling then? How else might he have responded?*
- *Where do you think they might be in their zones—high zone, low zone, or resilient zone?*
- *What might happen if they kept feeling hurt and doing unkind things to each other?*
- *How does what we have learned about risky emotions or needs relate to what is going on between Alice and Teddy?”*
- Explain that the circular drawing you have created with students is called a “feedback loop.” You can provide the following definition and explanation for the term:
 - *“A feedback loop is a reinforcing cycle; it will continue going around and around, with increasing intensity, until something or someone stops it or changes its course.*
 - *“Feedback” is a term that means something keeps feeding on itself and growing stronger, because part of its output becomes a new input. When a microphone is placed before a loudspeaker, sometimes it makes a deafening shrill sound. That is feedback, because the output of the loudspeaker is being picked up by the input of the microphone. This very quickly amplifies the signal into a deafening noise*

until someone points the microphone away from the speaker or turns the speaker down.”

- Explain that this drawing is called a negative feedback loop because it shows how the actions of each character leads to feelings which lead to more actions that only make things worse:
 - *Unkind action → Hurt Feelings → Unkind action → Hurt Feelings*
 - However, the characters in the story could make other choices. (They could do the equivalent of “turning the microphone in a different direction” or “turning down their speaker.”) Ask students to identify the “choice points” in the scenario; the places where a different choice could have been made by either Alice or Teddy.
 - Once students have identified the choice points (they are present during every step in the feedback loop), tell them that you will read a different version of the Talent Show story.
 - Read students The Talent Show Part II.
 - Explain that this story has a different outcome because the characters made different choices.
 - How would we draw another feedback loop, this time a positive one instead of a negative one, to show what happened in this second version of the story?
- Take student suggestions for how to draw the feedback loop, beginning with positive words, and continuing from there.
 - Ask students: how might the story and the positive feedback loop continue?
 - Finally, place the two feedback loops side by side so that your students can take a look at both, demonstrating what a negative feedback loop is and what a positive feedback loop is.
 - Remind your students how feedback loops get stronger as they continue. Feedback loops create patterns because, without intervention, they repeat and can grow into a habit.
 - Ask one or both of these questions:
 - What kinds of positive or negative loops have you seen happening at school? Remember to describe the situation without naming any names. (“I know someone who...”)
 - Would anyone be willing to share an example of a time when they felt like they were participating in either a negative or a positive feedback loop? What contributed to being able to stop, or to continue it?

The Talent Show, Part 1

“Alice walked into class, feeling tense and looking nervously around at her classmates. The day before Alice was singing in the talent show and had become very nervous when she saw everyone staring at her. She panicked and forgot the words right in the middle of the

song and had to start all over again from the beginning. As she took her seat, her classmate Teddy smirked, and sarcastically said, “Nice comedy routine at the talent show yesterday.” Alice’s face became hot and she retorted, “At least I have a talent, and am not a boring nobody like you!”

[Question:] *How is Teddy likely to respond to Alice?”*

The Talent Show, Part 2

“Alice walked into class, feeling tense and looking nervously around at her classmates. The day before Alice was singing in the talent show and had become very nervous when she saw everyone staring at her. She panicked and forgot the words right in the middle of the song and had to start over again from the beginning. As she took her seat, her classmate Teddy said, “You sounded good yesterday. Way to go.” Alice’s body relaxed. “Thanks!” she said, “That means a lot to me! You sounded good too!”

[Question:] *How is Teddy likely to respond to Alice?”*

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 10 minutes

Changing a Negative Feedback Loop into a Positive One

Overview

In this reflective practice, students consider the ways they could break a negative feedback loop and change it into a positive one instead. They

draw pictures representing both the negative and the positive feedback loops.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Feedback loops that frequently occur can lead to habits, which are patterns of behavior that can be difficult to change.
- People can make choices, and then work to change a negative loop into a positive one.

Materials Required

- Paper
- Markers or crayons for drawing

Instructions

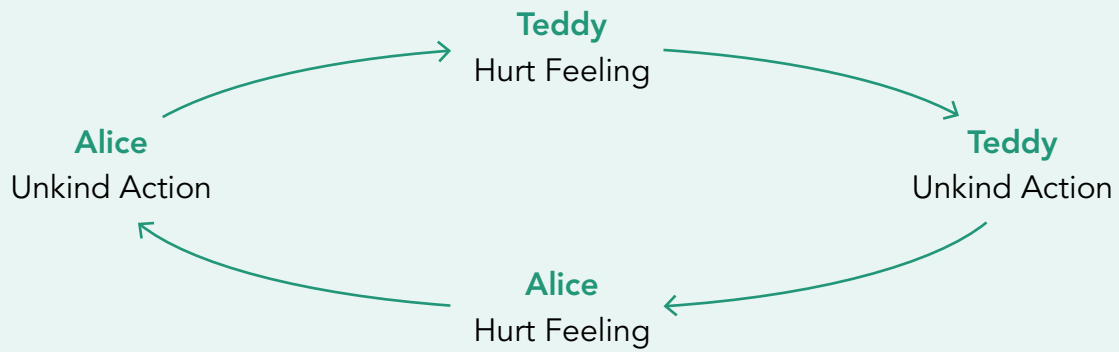
- Let students know that they are to draw a feedback loop that demonstrates a situation or relationship that’s positive in their life.
 - *“Think about something you work hard to be good at, or a relationship that’s valuable and positive in your life. Think about what some of the things are that you and others say and do that keep this experience or relationship thriving. Write and/or draw those into a feedback loop format.”*
- Once completed, students can share their drawings in pairs, adding in an appreciation for a specific contribution they or someone else makes to this positive feedback loop, that enhances their life and helps them “build the muscle” of choosing to add positivity to a situation.

GROUP DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

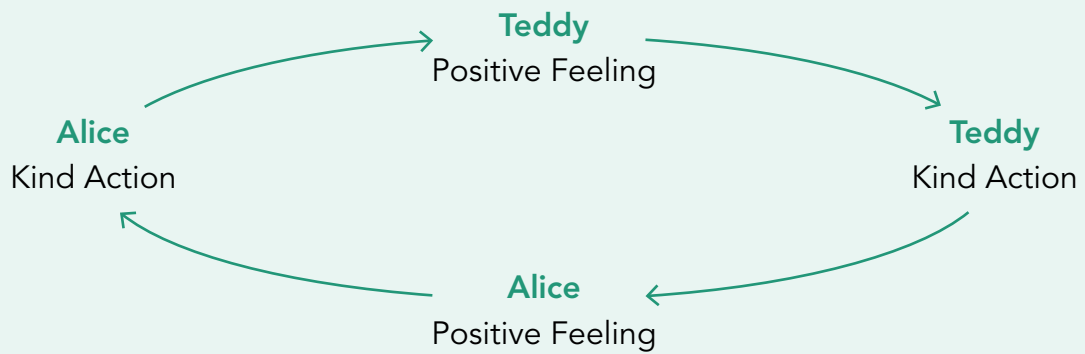
"How can we create more positive feedback loops in our school?"

Feedback Loops

Negative Feedback Loop



Positive Feedback Loop



Exploring Systems Thinking

PURPOSE

In this learning experience, students analyze the ways in which their school is a system, and identify the ways in which the people in the system are interconnected and interdependent. Students will explore the ways in which parts of the system (the people within the school) act together toward

common goals, and impact one another through their daily choices, attitudes and behaviors. This exploration provides a deeper understanding of interdependence that can help students gain an appreciation of the ways in which our behaviors, and the behaviors of others, have far-reaching consequences.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Explore how to apply the principles of systems thinking
- Identify the ways in which the school operates as a system.
- Explore how individuals within the school system impact one another.
- Explore the ways in which changing one part of a system leads to changes (some intended, some unintended) in other parts of the system.

LENGTH

35 minutes

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Appreciating Interdependence

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Large charts paper
- Markers
- Writing utensils
- Copy of the Systems Thinking Checklist

CHECK-IN | 3 minutes

- *“Let’s prepare for a short attention practice. How do we want our body to be?”*
- *First we’ll take a comfortable and upright posture. Then we’ll keep our eyes on the ground or close them.*
- *Before we strengthen our attention, we’ll do some resourcing or grounding to calm our bodies. Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let’s just bring our resource to mind. And let’s see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we’re going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s become aware of our breathing. Let’s see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back*

to your resource or grounding, or just take a small break, making sure not to disturb anyone else. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]

- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *You can strengthen your attention by focusing on sensations or by focusing on the breath. It’s your choice - it’s always up to you.*
- *What did you notice?” [Share aloud.]*

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 7 minutes

What is Systems Thinking?

Overview

In this engagement, students are introduced to basic principles of systems thinking through a simple checklist.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- A system is something that has parts, and its parts are connected to each other.
- When we look for the ways that things are connected, we are doing systems thinking.
- Systems are everywhere!

Materials Required

- Whiteboard or chart paper
- Markers
- Copy of the Systems Thinking Checklist (provided here)

Instructions

- Tell students you will be talking about systems thinking today. Give them the definition of a system.
 - *“A system is something that has parts, and its parts are connected to each other in such a way that if we change one part, we affect other parts in the system, and possibly even the whole system.”*
- Explain what systems thinking is:
 - *“When we look at something and its parts, and think about how the parts are connected and related to each other and to the whole, we are doing systems thinking.”*
- Introduce your students to the Systems Thinking Checklist, which helps us to explore things as systems. Use the checklist with them to explore the human body as an example of a system.

“Systems Thinking Checklist:

1. *Does it have parts and what are they?*
 2. *Are the parts connected to each other? How?*
 3. *If we change one part, does it affect other parts? How?*
 4. *Are the parts connected to other things on the outside? How?”*
- Ask students to suggest additional things that they could explore as systems. Run each suggestion through the Systems Thinking Checklist.
 - Conclude the discussion by reminding students: Systems thinking means looking

for connections between the parts of a larger whole.

Teaching Tips

- Almost everything has parts and can be thought of as a kind of system. Since the point is not to correctly identify what is and what is not a system, but rather to teach a certain way of looking at things as systems, be encouraging even when students suggest things that may not immediately appear to be systems.
- It can be helpful to show your students visual examples of things that can be easily recognized as systems, such as a house of cards (or any other construction where removing one part would cause it to collapse), a mechanical watch or other mechanical object where one can see the inner workings, a quilt where many threads are interconnected to form a larger whole; etc.

Sample script

- *“Today we’re going to learn about an interesting way of thinking. It’s called systems thinking.*
- *A system is something that has parts, and its parts are connected to each other in such a way that if we change one part, we affect other parts in the system, and possibly even the whole system.*
- *When we look at something and its parts, and then think about how the parts are connected and related to each other and to the whole, we are doing systems thinking.*

- *Systems thinking is essential for understanding anything that has complexity. Imagine if we were trying to understand something complex, but we just looked at the individual parts on their own, and failed to recognize how they interacted or were part of a larger system. We probably wouldn't arrive at a deep understanding and we could easily make mistakes.*
- *To get started with systems thinking, we have a simple checklist we can use.*

Systems Thinking Checklist:

1. *Does it have parts and what are they?*
2. *Are the parts connected to each other? How?*
3. *If we change one part, does it change other parts?*
4. *Are the parts connected to other things on the outside? How?*

- *We can use this checklist to look at anything complex, like the environment or our bodies. Why might it be important to think of our body as a system, rather than just a set of independent parts?*
- *Let's think of other things. What else might be a system? [Take examples from the class. Spend time going through at least one more example, using the checklist to see if the example is a system. If time permits, use the checklist for more examples.] Many things are systems.*
- *What problems might arise if we didn't think of these things as systems?*

- *Systems thinking means looking for connections between things and how they make up a larger, interconnected whole. Once we start looking for connections, we find that systems are everywhere."*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 20 minutes

Systems Mapping Our School and Exploring Unintended Consequences

Overview

In this activity, students will explore how the school can be understood as a system and will "map" the school as a system to show the connections between its parts. Students will work in small groups to explore the impact of a change on the school system. They will identify the ways in which change to one part of the system can cause "unintended consequences" in another part of the system.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- We can map and analyze systems and their parts.
- Things and people in the system impact one another in complex ways.
- Changing one part of the system can cause "unintended consequences" in another part of the system.
- In thinking about a change to a system, it can be helpful to think about the needs and feelings of all the people who could be impacted.

Materials Required

- Large chart paper and markers. You may want to use butcher paper, or tape together a few pieces of chart paper so that you can draw the systems map large enough for the whole class to see it from their seats.
- Paper for students
- Pencils or markers

Instructions

- Explain that the class will now apply systems thinking to your school.
- Draw a circle in the middle of the chart paper or board and label it “our school.”
- Use the systems thinking checklist to create a mapping of the school as a system, by going through each question and inviting students to draw and write on the chart paper. For example, when listing the parts of the school, ask them to name the various people and groups of people who are involved in the school or connected to it (teachers, students, the principal/school head, janitors, secretaries, nurses, bus drivers, parents, etc).
- Ask how the people in this system are connected to each other. [As necessary, prompt them with questions from the sample script below.]
- If there is anyone listed in the circle who is not yet connected to another person/group, guide students in making the connections visible.

- Ask them what they notice about the systems map and encourage them to make connections to previous learning, and to other areas that seem related to this experience.
- Divide students into groups of 4-6. Provide each group with a scenario and the question prompts below, as well as a large piece of paper to write on. Ask them to read the scenario and then explore as a group how the change described in the scenario might affect the school as a system and the people in it, answering each of the question prompts.
- Invite each group to share their scenario and their response to the questions about the impact that scenario might have. After each group shares, invite other students to suggest other consequences that might arise from such a change.

Teaching Tips

- During the discussion, your students may come up with responses that you had not considered. Be open to their responses and thought processes to help them explore the interconnectedness between the parts of a system.
- If the provided scenarios do not fit your context, create your own scenario or brainstorm one with your students.

Scenarios

1. The school decides to increase the size of the school by 500 students.
2. The principal/school head has set very high goals for student achievement. If

enough students can reach those goals, then the state will provide our school with more money. [Remember to explore both challenging aspects of this situation, and possible strategies the school already employs, or could employ—peer mentoring, collaborative learning, welcome ambassadors, explicit social and emotional learning experiences—that could work toward the “achievement of the high grades for state funding opportunity.”]

3. The people who run the school are considering moving the start time of the school day to one hour earlier.
 4. The school is deciding to eliminate student clubs, organizations, and sports in favor of academics.
- *“What consequences—positive, negative, or unintended—might arise for the school and the people in it? Are there any consequences that might be positive for some people but negative for others?”*
 - *How would people’s feelings and needs be affected?*
 - *Might this change lead to any negative or positive feedback loops?*
 - *What might some of the long-term effects on the school be?*
 - *How might the school best ensure that this change is implemented in a compassionate way?”*

Sample script

- *“Now that we know what a system is and we’ve practiced some systems thinking, we’re going to learn how to create a systems map.*
- *Let’s consider our school as a system.* [Draw a large circle on the chart paper and label the circle “our school” or the name of your school.]
- *Let’s focus on the people in our school as a system. Who are the people who make up our school? [As students provide answers, write each one of them within the large circle. Help them stretch to include everyone they can think of, including various ages and roles, who is connected to your school.]*
- *A systems map shows the connections between the parts of a system, so we can make note of that here. How are the people in this system connected with each other? Let’s see how many connections we can find.* [As necessary, prompt them with some of the following questions:]
- *What are some of relationships between the teachers and the students? For example, do students need to pay attention to their teachers? Do teachers need to pay attention to their students? So, attention is one of the ways that students and teachers are connected.* [To show this connection between teachers and students, draw a line labeled “attention” that connects the teachers and the students on the systems map. The lines have arrows on both ends to show that attention is both given and received by both parties.]

- *What are some other ways teachers and students are connected? [Take responses and add a few more lines that are labeled to show the nature of the connections.]*
 - *Is there anyone here who isn't connected yet to at least several other people? If so, let's see how they might be connected.*
 - *What do you notice about this systems map?*
 - *What if we were to change one part of this system? For example, what if 50 new students started at our school tomorrow? Would that create any change in the system? How would it impact the teachers, for example? Other students? How would that impact other people in the system? How might it make different groups of people in the system feel? How might it affect their needs? [If no one mentions the new students as part of the system, add them and ask for connections and impacts on them. Similarly, if positive consequences of adding new students doesn't get mentioned, prompt a brainstorm around that lens—fresh perspectives, new opportunities for friends, the wealth of knowledge and skills they would be bringing with them...]*
 - *Now, what if 500 new students were here to start school tomorrow, instead of 50?*
 - *We might take in the 500 new students with the intention of providing fair and accessible education, but this wouldn't be the only outcome of our action. There are unintended consequences that would happen as a result.*
- What are some of those? [Record student responses.] Might any of those consequences make it harder to reach our intended goal of providing all students with an excellent education?*
- *Next you'll work in small groups of 4-6, and will consider a short scenario that describes a change in the school system. You should discuss with your group how other parts of the system could be impacted by the change described in the scenario. Try to think of all the different possible outcomes the change might have—positive, negative, and unintended. An unintended consequence is an impact that was either unforeseen or unexpected by the person making the original change.*
 - *[Break students into small groups and provide them with one of the scenarios listed below, as well as the list of question prompts. Alternatively, brainstorm with them a scenario that they would like to analyze.]*
 - *[Give them time to brainstorm in their small groups before doing a final debrief. Visit with the small student groups to answer their questions and check in with their process and results.]*
 - *Let's hear something from each group. Please share your responses to the questions.*
 - *What have we learned about the ways in which changing one part of the system can impact the other parts?"*

DEBRIEF | 5 minutes

Choose one of the following:

- In partners: *“Thinking about systems helps us realize how important each part is and how important each person is, because each person’s actions affect many other people. What systems are you a part of and who do you impact?”*
- Whole group: *“What might be different if our class or school used systems thinking more regularly, to consider how our actions might impact others?”*

Systems Thinking Checklist

- Does it have parts and what are they?
- Are the parts connected to each other?
How?
- If we change one part, does it affect
other parts?
- Are the parts connected to other things
on the outside? How?

Events and Systemic Structures

PURPOSE

In this learning experience, students learn about how to more deeply understand an action or event by considering the many variables and factors that have led to it, including underlying systemic structures. Rather than placing all blame or praise on

an individual, students can identify how internal and external structures, some of which are beyond an individual's control, contribute to events. This understanding can deepen an appreciation of interdependence and common humanity.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Analyze the personal, social, and systems structures that contribute to an individual's behavior, including underlying systemic structures.
- Explore how identifying the deeper structures that shape behavior helps us better understand and empathize with others' situations and our own, and come up with better solutions.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Appreciating Interdependence

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Large sheets of paper
- Markers or pencils
- Iceberg graphic (included below)
- Copies of the handout "A Tale of Two Math Tests" (included below)

LENGTH

40 minutes

CHECK-IN | 3 minutes

- *“Let’s do a short attention practice. How do we want our body to be?”*
- *First we’ll take a comfortable and upright posture. I’ll be keeping my eyes open, but you can close them or look at the ground.*
- *Now choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can think of a new resource if you like: something that makes you feel better, safer, happier.*
- *Let’s bring our resource to mind and focus on it for a few moments quietly. You can also do grounding if you prefer. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that. If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a place in your body that feels better. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s become aware of our breathing. Let’s see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back to your resource or grounding. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]*
- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *Now let’s end the practice and open our eyes. What did you notice?” [Share aloud.]*

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 10 minutes

The Tip of the Iceberg

Overview

In this presentation/discussion, students will discuss the idea of understanding events and behaviors using the metaphor of the iceberg to explore context, patterns, systemic structures, and interdependence.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Actions and events can be understood not just through patterns of behavior, but also by looking at deeper systemic structures that underlie those patterns, like the submerged part of an iceberg.
- Identifying the deeper structures that shape behavior helps us better understand and empathize with others’ situations and our own, and come up with better solutions.

Materials Required

- Large chart paper
- Iceberg graphic (included below)

Instructions

- Draw an iceberg on a large piece of chart paper or the blackboard, show a photo of an iceberg, or show the image provided at the end of this learning experience.
- Ask students if they’d like to guess what percentage of an iceberg is typically visible above the water and what percentage is below the water. [Only 10% is visible above water.]

- Explain that the iceberg here is a metaphor for understanding events and behaviors. When we see a person do something, like say some angry words or fail a test, for example, we often know very little about the context. That action—the angry words or failing a test—is the tip of the iceberg, what we can see. When we look deeper into the context, it is like looking beneath the surface of the water to see all the things that contributed to that event.
- Share the iceberg graphic with students. At the top is the individual event (saying angry words, failing a test, passing a test.) These are easily visible to everyone.
- Show the next level: Just below the event are patterns of behavior. For example, the person who said angry words may often speak angrily. The person who failed the test may not study very hard. The person who passed the test might be a very good student in general. This second level can be seen by people who watch and pay attention over time.
- Show the next level: Beneath the patterns of behavior is an even deeper level, which we can only see by investigating deeply and doing systems thinking. This is the level of systemic structure. Systemic structures help to explain the patterns of behavior above them. They are called “systemic” because they point to larger systems around the individual in question. They are called “structures” because they lie beneath, support, and shape people’s patterns of behavior.
- Explain that we can explore systemic structures by asking our interdependence question: “What does this depend on?” Taking the event, such as doing well on a test, ask, “What does doing well on a test depend on? It depends on studying hard, which is the pattern of behavior. But what does that pattern of behavior itself depend on? What internal and external factors support that?”
- As they make suggestions, write them under two lists: “internal” and “external.” Explain that an internal factor is something within the person. Many of these have been explored already in SEE Learning, such as the ability to regulate one’s nervous system, focus attention, and navigate emotions. An external factor is something outside that person, such as a tutor, supportive parents or guardians, good books and study materials, a good teacher, time, having a good environment to study in, not having to work or do many chores that would prevent studying, etc.
- Conclude by tying the systems thinking back to empathy and compassion with these two questions:
 - *“How might analyzing events and behaviors in this way help us empathize with others?”*
 - *How might it help us practice self-compassion towards ourselves?”*

Sample Script

- *“Who has seen a photo of an iceberg, or even an actual iceberg? [Pause for responses.] What percentage of an iceberg do you think is typically visible above the water and what*

percentage is below the water, invisible to an approaching ship? [Answer: Only 10% of an iceberg is visible above the water. Show drawing or provided image of an iceberg.]

- Behavior is similar to an iceberg. What we can see and know about at first glance is like the tip of the iceberg: but what led to it lies beneath the surface, and we often can't see it right away. When an event occurs, we often praise or blame what we think we saw in that an individual's behavior without thinking about the larger context, including underlying systemic structures.
- Picture this iceberg as a visual representation of an event. At the top is the individual event, like saying angry words, failing a test, or passing a test. These are easily visible to everyone.
- Just below the event are patterns of behavior. For example, the person who said angry words may often speak angrily. The person who failed the test may not study very hard. The person who passed the test might be a very good student in general. This second level can be seen by people who watch and pay attention over time.
- But beneath the patterns of behavior is an even deeper level, which we can only see by investigating deeply and doing systems thinking. This is the level of systemic structure. Systemic structures help to explain the patterns of behavior above them. They are called "systemic" because they point to larger systems around the individual in question.

They are called "structures" because they lie beneath, support, and shape people's patterns of behavior.

- How would we know what the systemic structures are? We can start by asking our interdependence question: "What does this depend on?" Taking the event, such as doing well on a test, ask, "What does doing well on a test depend on? Does it depend on any patterns of behavior?" [Invite responses and write them, such as studying hard, paying attention in class, etc.]
- But what do these patterns of behavior depend on? Let's go a bit deeper to the level of systemic structure. [Invite responses.]
- At this deeper level, we can talk of internal and external structures. Internal is something within the person. We've explored many of these: the ability to regulate one's nervous system, focus attention, and navigate emotions. An external factor is something outside that person, like one's environment or other people. What systemic structures support the ability to study well? [Write student suggestions under two lists: "internal" and "external." External systemic structures can include: a good school environment, supportive parents or guardians, good books and study materials, good teachers, time, having a good environment to study in, not having to work or do many chores that would prevent studying, having been praised or supported in the past for studying, etc.]

- *How might analyzing events and behaviors in this way help us empathize with others?*
- *How might it help us practice self-compassion towards ourselves?*
- *When we look at these factors we start to see how that behavior is taking place within a broader system of interdependence.”*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 15 minutes

Looking for Systemic Structures

Overview

In small groups, students will consider a scenario and brainstorm a list of possible variables that could have contributed to different results for the two characters. Through comparing their brainstormed lists, they will consider the ways in which an event is the cumulative result of many factors.

Content/Insights to be Explored

In analyzing events, systems thinking encourages us to consider a longer time frame of analysis, so that we can uncover the connections between past influences and present outcomes.

Materials Required

- Paper
- Markers or pencils
- Copies of the handout “A Tale of Two Math Tests” (included below)

Instructions

- Have students break into groups of 4-5 students each.
- Provide each group with a handout that includes the scenario and instructions (provided below.)
- Instruct students to discuss the scenario as a group and to create two lists, based on their group brainstorm: one list should identify the factors and variables that might have led to Asia doing well on the math test; the other list should name all the factors and variables they can think of that might have contributed to Arnav doing poorly.
- Remind students to consider all of the internal and the external factors they can imagine might have contributed to the different outcomes.
- Let students know when they have two minutes left to complete their brainstorm and to decide on a spokesperson who will read their lists to the class.
- When the time is up, ask each group to share their brainstormed lists with the class.
- You might invite the speaker from each group to briefly raise their hand each time the person sharing with the class says one of the factors that is on their list, too. This acknowledges the similarities between the lists and the full work of each team, without hearing the redundant items. Then each subsequent speaker only reads aloud the

factors that they haven't already checked off when it was read by a previous spokesperson.

- Conclude by discussing one or more debrief questions.
 - *"Often when people try to correct an event, they only go down one level beneath the surface to the patterns of behavior. They try to change or "fix" that person's behavior. For example, how might a teacher or adult try to "fix" a student who is failing or not doing well on their exams? What type of effects might those actions have?*
 - *If we look deeper at the underlying structures, both internal and external, what might those include? What systemic structures help some students to do well? Which ones make it harder for some students to do well?*
 - *How might systems thinking help Asia and Arnav? How might it help the teachers or adults working with them?*
 - *What other events might we be able to understand better if we were to use this systems analysis?"*

Scenario: A Tale of Two Math Tests

Asia and Arnav are in the same math class and took a test last week. When the tests were returned by the teacher, Asia was very happy to see that she not only passed, but she got an "A," the highest grade in the class! When Arnav got his test, however, he saw that he received an "F" despite having met with the teacher for extra help. When their teacher handed back

the tests, she praised Asia's hard work. She told Arnav, however, that she was disappointed he didn't do better.

Sample Script

- *"Now that you're in your small work group, your task is to work together to review the scenario "A Tale of Two Math Tests" and think about it in terms of the "systems thinking iceberg." Your group will make two lists: one that names some systemic structures that could have led to Asia doing well on the math test and the other list that names those that could have led to Arnav doing poorly.*
- *Consider both internal and external structures. There are no "right answers." Rather, this is a chance to think broadly about many possible factors that might help lead to either of these outcomes. Please, everyone work to ensure that all voices in your group are heard, and be sure you record your ideas on your poster. You'll have about six minutes for this.*
- [Alert the groups when they have about two minutes left, and ask them to decide on a spokesperson who will read their lists to the class.]
- *Would the spokesperson in each group please raise your hand? [Count off to acknowledge each speaker, so the process goes smoothly as you begin.] All spokespeople, please listen carefully as your counterparts read their ideas. When you hear an idea that is the same as, or very similar to, one on your list, please raise your hand and check it off your list. Everyone,*

please note when hands go up, so we'll see where similarities in thought occurred. When it is your turn to speak for your group, please share only the items on your lists that have not already been shared by others, and checked off on your list. [Engage in discussion as appropriate to your group. Then debrief with the following questions:]

- *Often when people try to correct an event, they only think about aspects that are just beneath the surface, as they're thinking about a behavior. They try to change or "fix" that person's behavior. For example, how might a teacher or adult try to "fix" a student who is failing or not doing well on their exams? What type of effects might those actions have?*
- *How might systems thinking help Asia and Arnav? How might it help the teachers or adults working with them?*
- *What other events might we be able to understand better if we were to use this systems analysis?"*

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 10 minutes

Understanding Success through a Systems-Thinking Lens

Overview

Students will draw a systems thinking iceberg that shows the systemic structures that contributed to an accomplishment that they have achieved.

Content/Insights to be Explored

- Our actions are the result of many factors and variables, some of which we have control over and some of which we don't.
- We can appreciate ourselves for the positive choices we've made that helped bring a positive result to ourselves and others.
- We can thank others for the factors that we had no control over but that helped us achieve a goal or accomplishment.

Materials Required

- Paper for drawing
- Markers or crayons for each student

Instructions

- Ask students to identify an accomplishment that they have achieved, even something small. This could be a goal they reached, an opportunity they've had, or some small improvement or change they've made.
- Pass out paper and markers for all. Invite students to create an iceberg drawing that should be labeled with the achievement written at the tip of the iceberg, the part above water. Then, they can add the patterns of behavior and systemic structures (internal and external) that contributed to their achievement, placing these under the surface of the water.
- In identifying systemic structures, students may start with very concrete actions, such as a person who helped them directly. To help

them find the systemic structure from that, ask them to continue asking the interdependence question: “What did that depend on?” In other words, why was that person able to help them? Did that person need help from someone before them? What system(s) made it possible for this help to be given and received?

- Ask students to star the factors that they have some control over.
- Ask students to identify something they want to appreciate themselves for, connected to this accomplishment, and invite them to silently give themselves that message, noticing how that feels.
- Ask students to identify two people who are represented in their drawing who helped them reach their goal, and invite them to silently thank those people as well. Note that they may also wish to reach out to those people and thank them directly, too.
- Invite students to share out if they are comfortable.

Teaching Tips

Students may need some prompting or assistance in identifying an accomplishment. Remind them that accomplishments can be in any realm of their life, and can be small things that we may take for granted but that are actually important, for example: academic (learning something new, learning to read or write), social (having a friendship), physical

(being able to play a sport), creative (being able to draw, sing, or play an instrument), and so on.

Sample Script

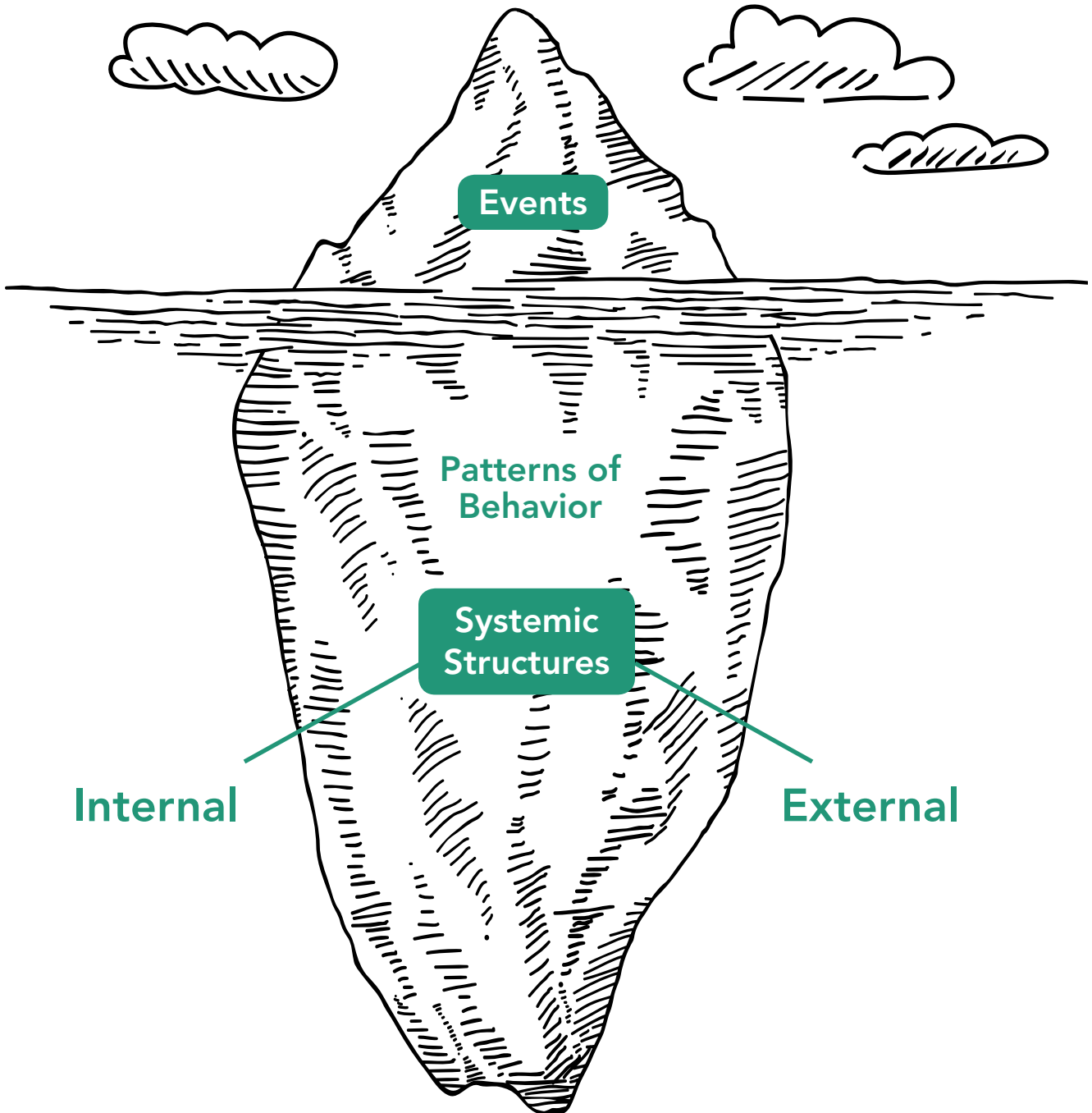
- *“Now we’re going to create a systems thinking iceberg of our own. Think for a moment about something you’ve achieved or accomplished. This could be a small thing. It doesn’t have to be anything super special. It can be an opportunity you’ve had, or something you’ve learned, even learning to read and write. It could be a friendship you have or a skill you have, like playing a sport or playing an instrument. It could be an event like doing well on something or being able to do something fun. [Pause.]*
- *On your paper you’ll create an iceberg drawing about your personal accomplishment. Please write the accomplishment on the tip of the iceberg, the part above water. Below that, see if there are any patterns of behavior that helped or contributed to your accomplishment, either by yourself or by others.*
- *If you have trouble thinking of something to put here, ask the interdependence question: “What does this depend on?”*
- *Now go one level deeper. What are the systemic structures that were involved? Remember these can be internal and external. Again we find these by looking for connections and asking about interdependence. What was necessary? What did these things depend on? Were any larger systems involved?*

- *You can think back in time also. Were other people involved? Other systems? [Provide time for thinking, drawing and writing. Move through the classroom.]*
- *We have just a few minutes left, so please finish the last idea that you're working on right now. [Pause.] And then look back over all of the factors and ideas that you recorded. Put a star next to the factors that you have some control over. [Pause.]*
- *Now identify something about this achievement that you want to appreciate yourself for, and silently give yourself that message of appreciation. It can sometimes be easier to think of nice things to say to others than to ourselves, so take this moment to notice how that feels inside when you express your appreciation to yourself.*
- *If you can identify people in your drawing who helped you, take a moment to silently thank them also.*
- *Now if anyone would like, you can share with the class one thing about your systems thinking iceberg."*

DEBRIEF | 2 minutes

- *"How might using systems thinking to understand events in our own life affect our thoughts or feelings about that event?"*

The Systems Thinking Iceberg



The Tale of Two Math Tests

Asia and Arnav are in the same math class and took a test last week. When the tests were returned by the teacher, Asia was very happy to see that she not only passed, but she got an “A”, the highest grade in the class! When Arnav got his test, however, he

saw that he received an “F” despite having met with the teacher for extra help. When their teacher handed back the tests, she praised Asia’s hard work. She told Arnav, however, that she was disappointed he didn’t do better.

What are some possible factors or variables that may have led to these different results?

Brainstorm two lists:

1. A list that identifies some of the systemic structures that could have impacted Asia’s result (the “A”)
2. A list that identifies some of the systemic structures that could have impacted Arnav’s result (the “F”)

Hint: Begin by considering what might have been happening on the day of the test. Then start thinking backwards in time. What happened the week leading up to the test? What about the month before that, and the previous month? And so on....

Asia’s result: the A	Arnav’s result the F
Internal structures impacting Asia’s result:	Internal structures impacting Arnav’s result:
External structures impacting Asia’s result:	External structures impacting Arnav’s result:

MIDDLE SCHOOL

CAPSTONE PROJECT

Building a Better World

SEE Learning Capstone Project: Building a Better World

The Purpose

The purposes of the SEE Learning Capstone Project are:

- 1 To provide students with an opportunity to integrate the knowledge and skills they have acquired through all the previous learning experiences;
- 2 To collaboratively develop compassionate systems thinking skills by exploring a particular issue of concern;
- 3 To invite students to engage in compassionate action that will have a beneficial impact on themselves, their school, and the wider community.

Primary Core Component



Community & Global Engagement

Overview

The SEE Learning Capstone Project is a culminating action activity for all the students in your class. It is sequenced in eight steps, each of which can be done in one or more sessions. First, students reflect on what it would be like if their entire school were a school of kindness and compassion, engaged in the practices of SEE Learning. After imagining and drawing what that would look like, they compare this vision to their own experiences in their school. They then choose a single area to focus on, and create a set of individual and collective actions. After engaging in these actions, they reflect on their experiences and share their knowledge and insights with others. For further information on the principles of the process for the culminating project and the role of the teacher in it, please go to the end of this section.

Implementing the Project

The project consists of eight steps, and will take a minimum of eight sessions to complete.

Providing consistent time for students to work on the project over the course of several weeks supports students in engaging fully in the process, and will provide opportunities for embodied understanding to develop. Read through all the steps and the notes at the end of this section before beginning with your students.

Step 1: Visioning a kind, compassionate school

Learning objective

Students will create their own illustrations of what the kindest, most compassionate school might look, sound, and feel like.

- 1 Start with a check in, selected from the curriculum, to allow students to center themselves and get ready for learning.
- 2 Explain what will be done today (personal illustrations of a school fully engaged in the principles of the SEE curriculum) and then lead a visualization that will help inform their drawings.

“Let’s think about what we’ve been learning about kindness, our resilient zones, emotions, and compassion. What would it be like if everyone in this school were living out what we have been learning? What kind of things would they be doing? What would the school be like? Let’s imagine that for a minute, closing your eyes if you wish.

Let’s imagine walking around the school. What do you see? What are people doing? What kinds of things are they saying? What else do you hear? How does it feel as you walk along?”

- 3 Record students’ responses on a piece of chart paper with three headings: See, Hear, Do. Under each, write what students say they imagine, what they hear people saying, and what people are doing in this kind and compassionate school. Then ask additional questions and expand the lists:

“How are they feeling in their bodies? What are they doing to stay in their resilient (OK) zones?”

How do these people respect each others’ differences?

How are people practicing self-compassion or self-kindness? What did you imagine that could look like?

What if something difficult happened? What would they do?”

- 4 Tell students that their task will be to capture one or more of these elements of an intentionally compassionate school through illustration, drawing a scene and labeling it with a “headline”

that will be shared with everyone later in the class. Remind them to work with pride and care, adding color and detail to their artwork.

- 5 Have students hang up their drawings on the wall in the classroom or hallway. Ask students to do a “gallery walk.” This means they will quietly walk around and look closely at everyone’s drawings while you play soft music. Instruct them to take note of one or more ideas they found valuable, and be ready to share why they had appreciation for that.
- 6 Have students take their seats, or gather in a circle, and share with the class one idea they really valued, that they thought would have an impact on school life, and why.

Note: If time permits have everyone share with the whole group. If less time is available, have the students do a “Turn To Your Partner” (TTYD), in which they pair up and share, reminding them that the goal of partner conversations is that our partner feels heard and understood. Close by asking for 2-4 “nominated volunteers”— students who encourage their partner to share with the whole group the idea they heard them describe in their partnership. If they are unfamiliar with such paired sharing, remind them of the mindful listening practice and model TTYD before they proceed.

- 7 Explain that next time our class will be thinking together about ways to help the reality of our school get closer to what we dreamed of in these pictures.

Step 2: Comparing the vision to reality

Learning objective

Students will compare their vision of the “kindest school ever” with what actually happens at their school, in order to see strengths and areas for improvement.

- 1 Start with a check-in to allow the students to center themselves and get ready for learning.
- 2 Explain what will be done today.

“Because we’ve been learning about how to be kind to ourselves and others, we want to share this with others in the school. So we want to find something that isn’t quite as kind as it could be in our school. Then we’ll see what we can do to make that better.”

- 3 Ask students to do a gallery walk again, revisiting their displayed drawings, and paying attention to these questions:

*“What is already happening at our school that looks like this?
What is not happening yet, but could?”*

- 4 Ask your students to list out some of the ways “this is already happening” and some ways “it’s not happening yet, as fully as we know it can be.” Generate a list to help decide on one thing to work on together. (Their ideas may include such ideas as: being more inclusive during lunch time or in class; keeping the school cleaner; making everyone feel like they belong; creating a plan so that everyone has the same ideas about how to show respect for each other; and so on.)

Note: When students identify problems that single out a particular person or incident (like “Thomas said a mean thing me.”), reframe to generalize it (e.g., “Sometimes people put other people down.”)

- 5 Work toward consensus about which area of growth you will all focus on together. You may wish to ask for a volunteer to speak for each item, to say why it is of high value as a point of change, continuing until all items have been spoken to. You might also divide the class into the number of groups that matches the number of suggestions on the list, and give those advocacy groups some time to think together about reasons their assigned item would be a good choice for the class to focus on. This stretches the students to take a positive stand for

an idea that was very likely not their own, building perspective-taking and empathy. Differentiate for your own context, taking added time for this step as best suits your students' current abilities and desire to think deeply about this choice. Relish the benefits of the process, along those of the practical choice they end up making.

- 6 After discussing all of the ideas, use a strategy to gather input to narrow down the focus area choices you'll actually implement. Work to build a consensus among the class on one particular item. You might give each student two color-dot stickers and let them choose which item(s) to put their votes on; publicly tally which get the top two amounts of votes; determine if the group can live with starting with one of those two for the "first item we pay attention to together," keeping the others on a Kindness-to-Come "parking lot / waiting list." These can be referenced as short-term areas of attention over the remainder of the year, before lunch or an assembly, for example, or when planning with the group for a substitute teacher's arrival.
- 7 While allowing the students to develop a consensus, keep in mind that the best issues for helping them develop systems thinking will be ones that are of a medium level of complexity (not too difficult but not too simple; not too big and not too small) and that are relevant to your students (i.e., they care about it), and that are within their sphere of influence.
- 8 When the class has determined one focus area, explain:

"Tomorrow we're going to make an interdependence drawing of the opportunity we chose, thinking about all the people involved, all reasons why this problem might exist, and how these things are connected. [Pause.] Take a moment and think about one thing that we could model or do for others that would help with the problem we've chosen. [Pause.]

TTYP. Turn to your closest neighbor to make a partnership or trio and share one of your ideas. Listen carefully to the ideas you hear from others. [Pause for student conversations.] We'll hear just a few of our ideas today, and then talk more about them (tomorrow) (in our next Capstone Lesson). [Pause.] Whose partner(s) had an interesting idea, that you'd like to encourage them to share? Take 2-4 volunteers to prime the pump for tomorrow's conversation. Express your sincere admiration and appreciation for the process and outcomes of the group's work, and let them know you're excited to see what happens in the next step."

Step 3: Exploring the issue through interdependence

Learning objective

Students will apply their knowledge of systems thinking as they explore the many people and things connected to the issue they have chosen through interdependence drawings.

- 1 Start with a check-in to allow the students to center themselves and get ready for learning.
- 2 Remind the group back into their previous discussion, during which they generated a topic to focus on and brainstormed some possible ideas for ways to address it. You may wish to continue this step, if that best suits your group.
- 3 Explain what will be done today. (Brainstorming in small groups to think about positive ways we could impact the system that is our school!)
- 4 Create five columns on a chart or the lesson board: Who, What, Where, When, Why.

"Who is involved? Let's draw or list the people involved.

What are they doing? What is happening?

Where is it happening?

When is this happening?

Why is it happening?"

- 5 Ask students to get into groups of 4-5. Use your professional judgment as to whether these should be voluntary groupings or to pre-determine groups that reflect a diversity of developmental and academic strengths and needs.
- 6 Explain that each group is going to write the focus issue in the middle of a large piece of paper. Around that they will all draw and write about anything or anyone connected with that focus issue, connecting it to the center topic with a line.

"To start, you can choose things from the Who/What/Where/When/Why exercise.

Who else is involved? (For example, if the issue is trash around the school, this would include the people who left the trash there, all the people who have to see it, the people who have to tidy it, and so on. If the issue is bullying, this would include bystanders, teachers, other

adults, the family of the bullying child, the family of the bullied child, etc. Note that although bullying is given as an example here, you are encouraged to find an issue that your students can address more easily and concretely.)

7 Move around and help the groups of students think through the various aspects of the interdependence drawing, supporting them in increasing their complexity by including more situations and people that are connected.

8 When the flow of ideas begins to ebb, get the whole group's attention and explain:

"All the things you've drawn are connected to the main issue in the middle. Now let's think of another level of connections! In what ways are any of the ideas you drew also connected to each other and to systemic structures? See if you can identify a systemic structures that might be involved and write them down."

9 Have each group share their drawings with the whole class, asking the class:

"What else could we add to our drawing, that is connected?"

Are there other systems or systemic structures we should be thinking of?"

10 After every group has shared, ask:

"What would it look like, sound like, and/or feel like if this problem were fixed or solved? If it just wasn't a problem here any more? What would that look and sound and feel like? [Pause.] Brainstorm a few ideas before letting students know that working toward this very outcome is our next step!"

Step 4: How to Make Things Better

Learning objective

Students will explore helpful actions that could be taken to address the issue they identified in the school.

- 1 Start with a check-in to allow the students to center themselves and get ready for learning.
- 2 Remind students about yesterday's collaborative work and refresh the energy and excitement they were feeling as they generated their interdependence webs. Explain what will be done today, that they will think together about helpful actions that could help change (*name their focus issue*).
- 3 Return to yesterday's groups and ask them to look at their interdependence drawings.

"When we look at the people in our posters, what are their needs? What are they feeling? What would help them?"

What can we find in our posters that is something we could help with, as a whole class, that would make things better?"

What can you find in your poster that shows something maybe you could do by yourself that would make things better?"

- 4 Publicly chart their suggestions in a numbered list under two headings "Individual Helping Actions" for things that a single student could do and "Whole Class Helping Actions" for things they suggest the whole class could do. You could also head the columns: "I Can..." and "We Can..."

- 5 Provide guiding questions to help them generate more ideas as necessary.

"(Often when someone drops some trash, there are other people who see it. What could they do? Or later some students might walk by. What could they do?)"

- 6 Explain that next time, you will start taking these actions to help make things better.

Teaching Tips

For example, tailored to their identified focus issue, the whole class actions for the example of trash in the school might include things like:

- As a class we could:
 - ① Make posters that say things about the issue (respecting our school; being kind to one another);
 - ② Talk to adults in the school about how to keep the school clean;
 - ③ Teach children in other classes of the school about the issue;
 - ④ Take turns in class meetings or at circle time, talking about their experiences related to the issue, what it feels like, and what they need from other children and adults.
- Individual student actions could be:
 - ① I could tell an adult about it;
 - ② I could speak up to the person who is dropping trash (or being unkind) and ask them to stop;
 - ③ I could offer encouragement to others when I see them doing the right thing.

Encourage students to find ways to research and learn more about the problem. For example, if possible:

- Arrange for people who were listed in the Interdependence Webs to visit with your class, so that your students can hear perspectives and ask that person questions.
- Ask students to come up with questions that they would like to ask their caregivers or parents. Incorporate these in take-home notes about the progress of the Capstone Project. Make returning a response optional; integrate responses into your ongoing discussions.
- Encourage students to directly observe things in the school related to their focus issue. Help them identify specific things they can pay attention to and then share in future discussions.

Step 4: Planning Individual Action

Learning objective

Students will choose which helpful actions they would like to take individually that would help with the issue they chose as a class.

- 1 Start with a check-in to allow the students to center themselves and get ready for learning.
- 2 Explain what will be done today.
- 3 Review the previously generated “I Can...” or “Individual Helping Actions.” list. Talk about what might help or get in the way of them actually doing whatever action they choose... (e.g., remembering, being brave, being persistent...) Let them know how you’ll be regularly checking in as a class on progress.
- 4 Give each student a post-it note and ask them to write on it their name and which action they would like to do (or just the number of that item). Ask them to put their post-it note on the board or list next to the item they chose. If you don’t have post-it notes, ask them to write their name on the list next to the item they would like to do. You might choose to prepare an extension to the chart that will hold the post-its / names that will appear as a bar graph.
- 5 Ask if there is anyone ready to do two of the things on the list. If so, they add their post-it or name to a second idea.
- 6 Gather in group or circle, with full view of the expanded “I Can...” or “Individual Helping Actions” chart. Ask them to notice where other classmates put their names, and to take some private think time to form an appreciation/because for an individual or that small group. Model an example from each category. (e.g., “I appreciate that xxx said they would focus on inviting people into games because sometimes I am looking for who I can play with.”)

(“Rather than singling out one student for this, consider using the name of a class pet or an adult who everyone knows and respects, like the principal, nurse, librarian, custodian...”) and “I appreciate that six people said that they will take action on saying kind things because that will help all of us feel better as we work and play together.”)

Be sure there’s time for each person to share their appreciation/because, knowing there’s always the option to pass.

- 7 Remind them of our class commitment to really taking the actions we put our names next to. As their “exit ticket” from the group to the next activity, each student speaks their own chosen action aloud and gets a high five (from the teacher if time for this to happen individually; or from a partner after they exchange their focus area).

Step 6: Planning Collective Action

Learning objective

Students will choose which collective helpful actions they would like to take as a class that would help with the issue they chose.

- 1 Start with a check-in to allow the students to center themselves and get ready for learning.
- 2 Reflect on actions taken so far, related to the previous lesson.

“Let’s think about the helpful actions we’ve done since we our last discussion. [Pause.] Talk to your partner and tell them one thing you did in the area you chose and how that felt. And if you didn’t yet, tell your partner what you think got in the way of doing what you wanted to do. (Allow time for both partners to share.) We’ll take one example from each of our focus categories. Who would like to nominate their partner in Category #1? (Read the description from your numbered chart. Repeat for each category.) Thank you to those who shared and those who nominated today! Everyone wish your partner well as they continue to try hard to live out this commitment.”

If appropriate in your context, you can expand this learning experience by hearing as volunteers, from some of the students who haven’t yet done something in their chosen area, brainstorming what got in the way of that, and supporting with ideas or encouragement as best suits your group.

- 3 Explain what will be done today. Remind them of their list of “We Can…” or “Whole Class Helping Actions ” that they will use today in thinking about areas they could take collective action on.
- 4 Guide students in discussing the ideas on their list, considering the scope of the problem/ opportunity as they see it, possible ways they might be able to influence change, the degree to which they feel excitement or commitment to helping make a difference in this area, etc. Let them know that an intended outcome of this discussion is the narrowing down to three collective action items, one of which each person in the class will commit to working on as their Capstone Project focus area.
- 5 Support students in working toward a consensus of three actions.

- 6 Create six groups of students, two groups for each of the three designated focus areas. [Create additional groups if the size of your class warrants that.]
- 7 Each group will draw and write their collective action focus in the middle of a large piece of paper. They will then write all the things they need or that are connected to this taking this action, as an interdependence drawing. (For example, if an action was to make awareness posters for the school, they would draw a poster, and around it would be all the things they would need, such as poster paper, colored markers, a place to hang the posters, permission from teachers to hang the posters up, etc.) Encourage the groups to add to their design negative and positive feedback loops that describe current conditions.
- 8 Give students time to walk around to look at the other group's drawings who are working on the same collective action, looking for ideas they'd like to add to their own drawings.
- 9 When they are done, ask each group to choose one spokesperson who will speak when their group stands to share their action-poster with the whole class.
- 10 Based on what is shared, each group then writes a list of "action steps" needed.. "So to accomplish that, we need to first do this..."
- 11 Explain that during the next session, you will all get started on working on those collective actions. To close, look together again at the list of individual actions. Invite them to move their post-it note or leave it where it is, and then to commit to putting that idea into action in a way they can report back on it next session.

Step 6: Taking Collective Action

Learning objective

Students will take actions individually and collectively to help the school, reflecting on and improving the process in an ongoing manner.

- 1 Start with a check-in to allow the students to center themselves and get ready for learning.
- 2 Explain what will be done today. [We'll begin by reflecting on individual actions we've been taking so far, review the collective action steps we generated last session, and then make a specific plan for the actions we'll begin taking on those group focus areas.]
- 3 Ask students to check the "I Can" chart as needed, to be ready to check-in with their partner on their personal focus actions, and then to sit in pairs. Ask:

"What progress did you have in actually doing the helpful actions you chose for yourself last time?" Share specific examples with your partner. If you did not do the action you thought you wanted to commit to, tell your partner why you think that is...)

- 4 Debrief the partner share with the whole group, reflecting about what actions they took using a few of the questions below. Each person should speak only for themselves, and the group will be purposeful about active, respectful listening without judgment.

"Which action did you do and what happened?"

Did anything good happen?

Did anything unexpected happen?

How did it feel to do that action?

What did you learn?

Would anyone like to try a different helping action from the list we made?"

What helping actions should we add to the list?"

- 5 Gather again in the groups that created the focus posters. Review the lists of preliminary steps for the collective class action. Decide on what will be done and in which order. See if anything else needs to be added. [You may decide to combine the smaller groups who have chosen the same focus area into one larger group for this step, as best fits your circumstances.]
- 6 Students will make a plan on specific ways they'll get started on the first item in the list, collectively as a group, indicating how every student is involved. Each student will identify something specific they will take action on. Many students may be choosing to take the same action, which is fine.
- 7 Over time, repeat this step (Step 7) as students make progress on their collective action, while checking in on individual acts each time, celebrating successes, brainstorming challenges, and encouraging them to take on additional actions as appropriate to the circumstances.

Teaching Tips

- The group could decide to take on the three “Whole Class” actions one by one, before moving on to the next, rather than tackling the three whole class actions simultaneously.
- Keep the action plan(s) visibly posted and check-in on them regularly as a class. You may decide to do this as a class opening or closing activity during lessons unrelated to the Capstone Project.
- Allow for ongoing alteration of the plan if it seems to students that certain actions are working better than others, and/or that other actions need to be added.

Step 8: Evaluating, Reflecting, Celebrating!

Learning objective

Students will reflect on their experiences and share them with others.

- 1 Start with a check-in to allow the students to center themselves and get ready for learning.
- 2 Explain what will be done today. [Reflecting on and celebrating actions taken, accomplishments, lessons learned.]
- 3 After students complete the entire action plan, reflect as a class by asking some of these questions: [You may wish to post all of the questions and let the students guide the debriefing discussion by choosing the question(s) they'd like to answer.]

“What do you feel most proud of? Why?”

What worked best, was most effective? How do we know?

What did you notice about your classmates as we did this project? About yourself?

What didn't work that well? How do we know?

If we could do the project again, what could we change about it, or do differently?

What did you learn about creating a kinder classroom/school/community?

How can we continue to do the things that worked well?

How can we share what we have done and what we have learned?

How might we celebrate our work together?

What do you want to keep doing for the rest of the year?

- 4 Consider celebrating your students' efforts through sharing the project with others in the school, the local community, or/and parents and caregivers.

Principles of the Capstone Project Process

The process, rather than the end goal, is the most important part of the project. This process is designed so that it sequentially builds systems-thinking skills, while keeping the focus on kindness and compassion for all involved, including the students themselves as they work to set and achieve goals. Consider having your students document the process (as well as the final product) so that you can share it with other teachers, administrators, parents and guardians. Also please consider sharing your story with the Emory SEE Learning program, making sure to obtain permissions before you distribute student work beyond the school.

The project can also be run prior to completing all the SEE Learning chapters. In this case, make minor adjustments as necessary, such as removing questions that use terms that would be unfamiliar to them.

SEE Learning always strives to maintain a strengths-based perspective (rather than a deficit-based one) that acknowledges an existing basis for constructive change. As your students focus on what can be improved in the school, help them to also remember the ways kindness and compassion are already being shown and received in your school. SEE Learning also emphasizes the agency of students and their ability to make a difference. As stated in the SEE Learning framework, “If students cannot bring about a large-scale change immediately, even the smaller scale changes they can affect are worthwhile, because small scale changes can grow into larger changes, and cumulative changes can be created through collective smaller actions.”










Role of the Educator

The role of the educator throughout this process remains that of facilitator. Your students will need to be guided through this process, and provided with support in carrying out their planned actions. This guidance should not involve giving them answers or telling them what to do, but rather involve prompts that direct them back to their own inquiry as well as to previous knowledge and skills they have already explored in SEE Learning. While this more gentle guidance takes time, students benefit greatly by learning from their own ideas, mistakes or missteps, and from each other.

Throughout the project, you can prompt students at appropriate times to remember previous activities and practices they have done in SEE Learning. (e.g., “Remember when we did the interdependence drawings? How is this like that?”) Encourage everyone to make space for those who seem quieter or less engaged, so that all students are involved and no one is left out. In developing their self-awareness and social awareness skills, students can monitor their own contributions, stepping up or stepping back to help keep the classroom dialogues in balance. Feel free to supplement the steps given above with additional activities taken from the curriculum, such as mindful listening exercises and reflective practices.

SEE Learning provides educators with a comprehensive framework for the cultivation of social, emotional, and ethical competencies. It also provides an age-specific curriculum for K–12 schools, as well as a support structure for educator preparation, facilitator certification, and on-going professional development. SEE Learning builds upon the best practices in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs and expands on them by drawing in new developments in educational practice and scientific research, including attention training, the cultivation of compassion for self and others, resilience skills based on trauma-informed care, systems thinking, and ethical discernment.

THE SEE LEARNING FRAMEWORK

		DIMENSIONS		
		AWARENESS	COMPASSION	ENGAGEMENT
DOMAINS	PERSONAL	 <p>Attention & Self-Awareness</p>	 <p>Self-Compassion</p>	 <p>Self-Regulation</p>
	SOCIAL	 <p>Interpersonal Awareness</p>	 <p>Compassion for Others</p>	 <p>Relationship Skills</p>
	SYSTEMS	 <p>Appreciating Interdependence</p>	 <p>Recognizing Common Humanity</p>	 <p>Community & Global Engagement</p>



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