

Choose Love For Schools™

Grade 6

Compilation of All Lessons in All Units



Sixth Grade| COURAGE

Grade 6, Unit 1: COURAGE

Concepts

Courage is the willingness and ability to overcome obstacles despite feeling embarrassment, fear, reluctance, or uncertainty (Martinez, 2015). When you practice courage, you make positive choices even when it may be difficult for you. It takes courage to express our feelings, make ethical choices, tell the truth, admit mistakes, ask for forgiveness, and to be kind. This is especially true when others might not be leading by example. Courage requires self-awareness and self-regulation (Greenberg, 2016). Students practice identifying feelings in themselves and others. The “courage” exercises assist students in learning how to help their brains regulate the amygdala by activating the prefrontal cortex (Martinez, 2015).

Jesse saved the lives of nine of his classmates before losing his own. His actions and message of “nurturing, healing, love” inspired the “courage” section of this curriculum. Students are invited to consider how they can choose small acts of courage every day. Over the course of the lessons, students reflect on how courage helps them build self-confidence and strong senses of identity.

Lesson Breakdown

In each lesson, you will find the following: Student Outcomes, SEL Skills Practiced, Educator Preparation, Lesson, Call to Action and Extension Opportunities.

Each unit has 6 lessons, for a total of 24 lessons (not including the Brave New World Launch lessons). At a pace of one lesson per week, each unit of the program will take 6 weeks to complete. If this is taught in a class that meets daily, you may choose to use our accompanying slides which are in a 5-day format per lesson. There are also opportunities

for you to choose to utilize the extension opportunities to further enhance the curriculum. This program is easily adapted to varying middle school schedules, allowing for quick blasts of learning in a homeroom or advisory period, or extended learning blocks in a class. You'll find lessons easy to modify to make them longer or shorter based on your needs.

We encourage you to teach all lessons in the program in the order and manner in which they are presented. However, we acknowledge and appreciate a teacher's ability to know their class, their schedule and the needs of their students to deliver the curriculum in the most appropriate way possible.

The **Student Outcomes** section will tell you what the students will be able to do following the lesson. This will help you focus on why the lesson is being taught, and why it's important for students. The **SEL Skills Practiced** will connect the lesson with CASEL's 5 Social-Emotional Skills. The **Educator Preparation** section will tell you what materials or resources you will need to gather before the lesson.

The **Lesson** section provides an easy-to-use script for you to read aloud. It guides students through a discussion of the lesson. The **Call to Action** section provides students with opportunities to practice what they've learned and to share their new learning with family and/or friends. The **Extension Opportunities** provide shorter lessons and activities to reinforce and extend what students have learned as well as introduce new skills and tools.

Family Focus and Connection

Families and caregivers are encouraged to become familiar with the skills, concepts, and neuroscience associated with the Choose Love for Schools program. Within the following curriculum you will find optional Extra Voltage activities that encourage families, parents, and caregivers to practice Choose Love skills and concepts at home. We have included a Family/Caregiver Letter in the Educator Guide as well as in the Resource Section. This letter can be sent home to families to let them know about the program and its benefits. This will make families/caregivers more aware of what their children are learning in school and can open a dialogue between home and school.

Your Power of Positivity

As an educator, how do you show courage in the classroom, throughout the school, and with parents/caregivers? You demonstrate courage every day. Take a moment to celebrate how courageous you are, and recognize everything you are contributing to your learning community. When school culture values courage, whole communities can work together to take healthy risks. This, in turn, develops high-trust learning environments. Practice small acts of courage with your colleagues, families/caregivers, and yourself. It's the small things that can make a big difference.

For example:

- Ask your students, colleagues, staff, and community for help. Modeling this behavior lets students know that it's okay to reach out for support.
- Exchange open and honest feedback with coworkers.
- Pause to acknowledge your own fears and vulnerabilities. This cultivates connection and it can open doors for others to do the same.
- Bring your whole self to work. What activities, causes, and passions do you have that are appropriate to share with your school community? Do you recycle? Bike to work? Play a sport? Like to knit? Allow your students and coworkers to get to know you, not only as an educator but as a fellow community member with diverse interests, challenges, and creative insights.

LESSONS

Introductory Lesson: Preparing For Our Choose Love Journey

Lesson 1: Exploring Courage

Lesson 2: Who's the Boss?

Lesson 3: Focused Awareness

Lesson 4: Fear and Courage

Lesson 5: Courage and Our Relationships

Lesson 6: Peer Pressure



Introductory Lesson: Preparing for Our Choose Love Journey

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Create Choose Love Journals.
- Interpret the definition of courage
- Discuss the meaning and application of courage.
- Construct a Choose Love Constitution

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

- The Choose Love Journal is used frequently throughout the curriculum. If journals are not available, alternate materials such as paper and a cover sheet can be used. The goal is for students to have a place to write their ideas, feelings, comments, notes, etc.
- Have chart paper ready for the class to create a Choose Love Constitution.

Lesson

“To kick off our year Choosing Love, we are going to work together on two pieces of our journey that will carry us through the entire year.

“Has anyone heard of the Constitution? What is it?” Allow for responses.

“A constitution is a document that we create together as a group, which explains how we agree to treat each other. It’s a set of guidelines that we create to ensure that each person feels safe, cared for, and able to be their best self in this classroom. We are going to make our own Choose Love Constitution today!”

“Most of the time people create rules for us that we must follow, like rules for a game, what acceptable behavior is at school or work, or what is legal. However, for our Choose Love Constitution, you will create the rules and guidelines about how to treat one another.”

“Why do you think it’s important to create our own constitution? How do you think it would benefit our class to create and have a constitution?” Ask students if they are familiar with the ‘Golden Rule’, if not remind them of it. Ask them how it could benefit them.

“Think quietly for a moment about how you want to be treated, and how you want to treat others. Then, let’s list some ideas for what we want to include in our Choose Love Constitution.” Write ideas on the board or on a visible piece of paper. Have students copy the rules into their Choose Love Journals.

Typical examples of classroom constitution rules include: treat each other with respect, the Golden Rule, have courage, listen to one another’s opinions, share feelings openly and honestly, ask permission before borrowing something, don’t laugh or make fun of others, help each other, speak kindly to each other, work through conflicts peacefully, etc.

“It can take courage to uphold our Choose Love Constitution. How could you help someone who is having a difficult time agreeing to or following our constitution?”

“Now that we’ve created this Constitution together, it’s important that we all agree to it by signing our names. I will start.” Pass around the constitution to sign or leave it on the desk for students to come up and sign to maintain social distancing requirements.

“We are going to continue expanding and refining our constitution over the course of the year. It will grow with us as we explore what it means to Choose Love.”

“Another important piece of the Choose Love for Schools program involves writing in a journal. It has been proven that journaling can help manage emotions, boost your memory, heal from small and large events, inspire creativity and help you become more mindful!”

Give students a purchased journal, spiral notebook, binder or have them make their own using paper and cardboard or construction paper covers. Have some art supplies/materials available and allow students to decorate their Choose Love Journals.

“In your journals, write down one part of the constitution that you think will be hard for you to follow. Being mindful of this will help you to put more attention and effort on practicing it.”

Students can take the time they need to answer the journal question and any thoughts/ideas that they have and would like to write down.

****It’s important to remind students that their journals are for them! The benefits of journaling are for THEM, not you. Encourage them to show courage and write their thoughts and feelings so they can experience the true benefits of journaling in their everyday life!**

Call to Action

Students should take time outside of class to decorate their Choose Love Journal. They can draw, print, write, collage anything that represents them or makes them happy. Any inspiration that can be a reminder of Choosing Love is encouraged!



LESSON 1: Exploring Courage

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Create a personalized suitcase related to COVID experiences.➤ Define trauma.➤ Demonstrate focused awareness through grounding.	<p><u>CSED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Moral Character➤ Performance Character➤ Intellectual Character <p><u>SEL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Self Awareness➤ Self Management➤ Responsible Decision Making

Educator Prep

- Have chart paper or butcher paper taped up or laid out in the room for the students to create a Choose Love mural. If this is not available, individual sheets of paper that can be put together to create a mural will work as well!
- Have markers or crayons available for students to use
- **TEACHER TIP:** Prepare to use non-judgmental responses in this discussion. Correct off-topic responses, but otherwise respond non-judgmentally. Unlike some academic subjects, where there are clear right or wrong answers, social and emotional learning is more ambiguous and subjective. Say things like “thank you” or “that’s one idea, who has another to add” in order to acknowledge participation

without making value judgments about responses. You can also ask follow up questions about student's responses as a way to increase engagement without critiquing their ideas, feelings, or experiences. This teaching strategy helps bring psychological and emotional safety in the classroom and improves learning by fostering trust and connections and encouraging participation.

- **TEACHER TIP:** Talking about love, feelings, challenges and relationships in school is likely unusual for students. You may notice behaviors such as laughing, distraction, silliness, mockery of content, or generally acting out throughout the program. If you notice this happening rather than punishing students' negative behaviors, simply acknowledge that it might be uncomfortable to discuss these topics. Let students know that they are encouraged to participate, but it is not mandatory. It's their choice whether to share or not. Also let them know that you hope to create a classroom culture where everyone feels safe and comfortable learning, sharing and participating. By learning about and discussing these subjects, students will become more self-aware and confident. They will cultivate connections with each other. And this social and emotional learning will help out students to become more resilient and better able to handle whatever may come their way. WE LOVE THIS!!
- Create a physical cue for courage. Physical cues help students remember and embody the lessons about courage. Options include using American Sign Language (ASL), another hand symbol you create, clapping chants, brief rhymes, or a full body pose.



- Sign for "Brave"
- Prepare to document students' classroom constitution on a piece of poster board or paper. It should be visible and accessible to students at all times.

Lesson

“Now that we’re ready to get out of our comfort zones, grow and take risks, we will start our first unit at the beginning of the Choose Love Formula: courage.” Use your physical cue for courage when you say the word now and throughout the lessons. “

We’re going to focus over the next few weeks on what courage is, how it benefits us, skills to build our courage muscles, and how to practice courage in our daily lives. We’re going to have a lot of fun!”

“Some of these concepts we’ll cover, such as love, compassion, feelings, challenges, and relationships are not topics regularly discussed in school. How do you feel talking about these things?” Encourage students to use emotional language such as “scared”, “nervous”, “happy”, “excited” instead of judgmental language such as “weird”, “stupid”, or “strange”.

“What challenges do you face on a day-to-day basis? Or what do you expect to face in Middle School?” Allow students to share ideas or document them in their journals.

“Facing challenges takes courage. You use courage in your lives everyday! Courage is not always only used for life-threatening events...it is also used every day when you decide to get up and face the day!”

“Courage is defined as the willingness and ability to work through obstacles despite feelings of embarrassment, fear, reluctance or uncertainty. When you make positive choices, even though they may be difficult for you, you are practicing courage.”

“When we think of courage and courageous acts, we often think of the extreme, like saving someone from a burning building, but there are heroic acts of courage and everyday acts of courage that strengthen our courage muscles as well!”

“What are some examples of heroic acts of courage?” Encourage students to identify examples from the news, stories they have read, or from history.

“What are examples of everyday acts of courage?” Encourage students to identify acts of courage in their personal lives, school or community. This can be things they’ve experienced or witnessed or even things they’ve done themselves.

“Listen to the following examples of courage. Put yourself in the person’s shoes and take their perspective. How much courage do you think you’d need to do what they did? Show me five fingers for a lot of courage, three fingers for some courage, and no fingers if you think they’d need very little courage.”

*You may choose to put numbers 1-4 or 1-5 around your classroom and have students move around the room to get up, as well as giving yourself a visual for where the majority of the class feels each act would belong on the ‘courage scale’.

Use scenarios that are relevant to your class, or select from the examples below.

- Asking someone to be your boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Trying to score in the last minutes of a game.
- Asking a teacher for help.
- Telling an adult you trust that you’ve been harmed in some way.
- Standing up to a bully.
- Saying hello to a new student.
- Standing up to a social injustice.
- Taking a test.
- Standing up for someone who is being teased.
- Performing in front of an audience.
- Solving a conflict peacefully.
- Helping someone in need.
- Learning something new.
- Auditioning for a team or play.

“Small and large acts of courage are both important. One is not better than the other. Even the littlest acts of courage can make a huge difference. Sometimes we’re called on to demonstrate great acts of courage, while other times we are asked to show small acts or everyday acts of courage. Courage sometimes looks like great physical strength, but it can also sound like gentle, kind words.”

“To end today’s lesson, let’s create a courage mural in our classroom.....include words and pictures of what courage means to you right now!” This mural can be posted up in the classroom or out in the hallway to remind students that we use courage every day!

Call to Action

Share the definition of courage and examples of everyday acts of courage with your family and friends. Can you demonstrate everyday acts of courage between now and the next class? What would they be?

1

EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY: Courage Quotes

Educator Preparation

Have the quotes for this lesson posted on the board.

Lesson

“Last time, we created our Choose Love Constitution. Today we’ll talk more about specific ways we can show courage in the classroom. What are some ways you might need to show courage in the classroom or at school?” Write the list generated on the board and have students copy it in their Choose Love Journals. Be sure to include some or all of the following: overcoming nerves on the first day of school, introducing themselves to a new student, making a new friend, asking for help, taking a test, sharing their feelings, apologizing for mistakes, standing up for someone, not caving in to peer pressure, trying out for a team or play, standing up to a bully, giving your opinion even though it may not be the same as that of others, learning something new, continuing to try after making mistakes, not giving up, working on something challenging, being yourself, etc.

“It takes courage to be who you are, to make new friends and fit in, to stand out in a crowd, to navigate middle school and its challenges, and to follow our Choose Love Constitution. Courageous people stand up for what’s right even if they are afraid. They follow their hearts and work towards what they know is right and for what they want despite challenges. Did you know that people who overcome their fears and show courage are happier and healthier? Why do you think that is the case?”

“Courage has many benefits. Courage can help us build confidence, try and learn new things, and face and overcome obstacles. It can help us celebrate our differences, be creative, and say no to things that might be harmful to us. It also feels good to act courageously. How do you feel after having acted courageously?” Allow for a few responses.

“How has acting courageously benefited you in your life? What have you achieved as a result of having courage?” Allow for sharing of varied responses.

“Here are some quotes about courage that we are going to discuss:

“It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends.”

— *J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.”

— *Winston S. Churchill*

“Above all, be the heroine of your life, not the victim.”

— *Nora Ephron*

“The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.”

— *Nelson Mandela*

Discuss these quotes with the class.

“Now I want you to try to write your own courage quote. Think about the people you know who are courageous. Think about your own courage. Think about Jesse Lewis and the courage he showed. Now try to write your own courage quote in your journal. You can use the words courage, brave, hero...or any other courage related words you can think of in your quote. You can even write it as a definition; *Courage is...*”

Allow the students to write their courage quotes in their journals. Have them share the quotes with the class. You may even want to write these on chart paper and post them around the classroom to inspire the students to have courage.

Tell the students that they showed courage just sharing their quotes today! These quotes can help them remember to use courage to help them overcome their fear.



EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY: COURAGE IS...

Educator Prep:

You will write the following on the board :

- Courage is (sights, smells, sounds, textures, tastes)
- Courage is (emotions)
- Courage is (actions)
- Courage is (desires).

Lesson:

“We talked the other day about courageous role models. We discovered and highlighted some of the qualities they have in common. On any given day, you could find yourself uncertain about a difficult and important situation or decision. You may find yourself called on to show courage. When that happens, remind yourself of what courage looks like, sounds like, feels like. Remember the qualities and values that exemplify courage. You have these qualities in you. Have a courageous voice and listen to what it tells you and how it moves you. We are going to write “Courage is...” poems. Complete the statements written on the board in your journal. Let your words be your inspirations!”

Courage is (sights, smells, sounds, textures, tastes).

Courage is (emotions).

Courage is (actions).

Courage is (desires).

If students need prompting, read some of the examples below.

Courage is a hug, the taste of victory, the sound of applause.

Courage is belly fire, humility, a full heart, love.

Courage is standing up, standing still, risk.

Courage is striving, designing, inviting.

Courage is peaceful like the sound of the ocean waves and the feel of the gentle breeze through your hair, urging you on.

Courage is calm, confident, determined, excited.....a rush that lifts you past your fears.

Courage is believing, changing, growing, leading the way for yourself and others.

Courage is hopeful, making a difference and choosing love.

Ask for some volunteers to share their courage poems. You may also choose to have students write these up nicely and decorate for a classroom or school display.



LESSON 2: Who's the Boss?

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Students will identify the parts of the brain and how they function.
- Students will learn and demonstrate the brain hand model.
- Students will recognize the importance of breathing as a way to reduce anxiety when fearful or in a challenging situation.
- Students will practice Focused Awareness and identify the benefits of its use.
- Students will learn and use the Rest and Relax skill and understand its purpose and benefit.

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Responsible Decision Making

Educator Prep

- For more in-depth understanding of how our brains and bodies respond to fear, watch this video about the neuroscience behind the program
- [Your Brain is a Cell Phone](https://safesha.re/hig) Why Do We Lose Control of Our Emotions (https://safesha.re/hig)

➤ **Vagus Nerve**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OeIDnUFBnuo47i1L5oChf6VI7IKBUOnx3CzBEmbUsoE/edit>

You may like these videos

- As an additional resource, watch leading researcher Dr. Dan Siegel discuss the brain. [Dr Daniel Siegel presenting a Hand Model of the Brain](https://safesha.re/hih) (https://safesha.re/hih)
- [Brain & amygdala hand model explains how thoughts & emotions fuel anxiety](https://safesha.re/hii) (https://safesha.re/hii)

LESSON

“Today we’re going to talk more about how our brains, hearts, and bodies work together to help us to choose courage, to do the right thing, and to make positive choices. We’ll get a better understanding of the parts of the brain and their functions. And we’ll also see what happens to our brains when we feel scared, anxious, or overwhelmed.”

“Has anyone ever been in a situation where they felt scared to do something?” Share your own personal example, describing the situation including what you were doing, feeling, and thinking. Allow a few students to share their examples. Normalize fear as a natural response and thank them for showing courage by sharing.

“How did your body let you know that you were feeling fear?” Examples include: heart racing, body tense, eyes wide, upset stomach, trouble breathing, sweating, feeling hot, jittery, trouble focusing, etc”

“Everybody has fear and that’s not a bad thing. In fact, fear is a really important feeling. It is how we respond to real or perceived physical or emotional danger, threat, pain, evil, harm, or unfavorable situations. Fear can be a distressing and powerful emotion. It is really vital because it’s like an alarm inside us that alerts us to potential danger. If we didn’t have or experience fear, we wouldn’t be able to protect ourselves from real threat or harm. But as I mentioned before, sometimes we are fearful of something that is perceived....we fear something that isn’t real, something that is imagined or exaggerated, or something that is really not a true threat or harm to us. And while fear can call and move us to action when it’s necessary, fear can also paralyze us and interfere with our ability to have a happy, healthy, productive life.”

“Fear is necessary, but we need to have a healthy and realistic level of fear. In our caveman days we needed fear to survive. It kept us aware of all of the dangers around us. In today’s world we do not need this constant fear. We must make sure we are aware of our feelings of fear. We need to acknowledge our fear and figure out if it’s coming from something that is a real danger or something we’ve created, imagined, or exaggerated. It’s important to have ways to address our fear so that it’s helpful and not harmful to us. We need to stop and think through our fear and evaluate where it’s coming from and if it’s a true call to action and perhaps an invitation to be courageous, a time to ask for help, or a time to let it go because it’s not serving us in any way.”

In our next lesson, we will talk about a few ways to calm down when we are anxious, nervous, afraid or uncertain.”

“There are many reasons why we sometimes choose not to act courageously. We might not know how to help, we might not feel safe, we might think someone will laugh at us, etc. Some degree of fear is always present when we act courageously. Courage is not the absence of fear- it’s a choice- it’s choosing to act even if you’re afraid. Fear, like every emotion, is normal and important. Our brains send our bodies signals about fear to keep us safe and protect us from danger. Three parts of our brains work together in these instances. To better understand fear, let’s see what happens to our brains when we feel afraid. Let’s learn about the three parts of the brain: the reptilian, the mammalian, and the human brain.”

Show the video: [Brain & amygdala hand model explains how thoughts & emotions fuel anxiety](#)

“We’re going to learn the brain hand model. Everyone hold up your hand like you are going to give someone a high five.” Hold up your hand, palm facing out. “Next tuck your thumb into your palm.” It will look like you are holding up four fingers. Help students as necessary.

“Let’s imagine that your hand is your brain. Your wrist and palm are where your reptilian brain is. It’s responsible for regulating your breathing, heart rate, and body temperature. It helps us stay alert and reactive to our environment. It controls our balance, coordination, and reflexes. It’s the first part of our brain to alert us to fear or danger. It’s the fastest to respond. It never sleeps! Let’s call this part of our brain the lizard brain.”

“Your thumb is the mammalian part of your brain. Let’s call it the numbat. It’s responsible for our emotions and social behavior. It helps us make value judgments—deciding whether something is right or wrong. It strongly influences our behavior, and can sometimes make us feel like we’re riding an emotional roller coaster. A numbat, by the way, is a cute, furry animal in Australia.”

“Now, close the rest of your fingers over your thumb to make a fist. These fingers represent the part of your brain that helps you think clearly and problem solve.” Hold your fist next to your head, fingernails facing out. Point to your fingertips and then point to your forehead. “This is the front part of your brain, near your forehead. Let’s call it the human brain. It helps us think clearly and problem-solve. This part of the brain is responsible for imagination, thought, planning, and decision-making. It helps us learn language, and is the source of self-control.”

“These parts of your brain—the lizard, the numbat, and the human—work together to help you play and learn, but when we get scared or overwhelmed, this happens. It’s called ‘flipping your lid’.” Flip up your four fingers.

“Look how far away our fingers are from our thumb! It’s hard for the lizard, numbat, and human brains to work together when they’re so far away from each other.”

“There are many things we can do to help them cooperate again. Today when we took a deep breath and relaxed our mind by visualizing, we learned a simple way to help our brain parts work together and calm down. We’ll be learning some more ways to help our brain best work and ways to help reduce our anxiety and fears and promote courage. For now, in your journal, write down a few things you’ve learned about your amazing brain.”

Call to Action

Share the brain hand model with your family and friends. Explain each part of the model using its name and what it does for our body.

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EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY:

Trash It

Educator Prep

- Have pieces of paper for students to use or allow them to use paper in their journals or binders. These can be pieces of scrap paper.

Lesson

“Today we are going to practice letting go of negative feelings and thoughts that hold us back and make it difficult to be our best selves. Research shows that 70% of our thoughts are negative and 90% of those thoughts are repetitive. But did you know that we can change those thoughts? On a piece of paper or in your journals, write down at least one negative feeling and thought that you have playing in your brain and heart now.” You can do this yourself and share with the class as a way to encourage a few other students to share what they’ve written. It is helpful for students to realize that they are not alone and that their peers/teachers/others have negative thoughts and feelings and often feel the way they do.

“Now take that paper and shred it into tiny pieces. Enjoy every minute of getting rid of the negative thoughts and feelings that you wrote on the paper. Now we are going to throw every little bit in the trash. We are ‘trashing’ our negative thoughts and feelings. When you ‘trash’ the negativity, feel the relief of getting rid of something that darkens and shadows your life...feel the release of the darkness and the weight being lifted from you.” You or someone else can go around the room and let students dump their pieces in the trash or have them take turns coming up to the trash basket and throwing them out ceremoniously..

“How does it feel to get rid of the negativity? Look at the feelings list and pick a word that describes how you feel after doing this?”

“Now draw a heart in your journal. In the heart, write at least one positive feeling and thought. This should be something that makes you feel good, brings you peace and love,

and boosts your courage and confidence.” Again, you can share your example with the class and see if anyone else will share theirs.

“Take a minute to decorate your heart and your page, choosing bright colors and symbols or pictures that bring you joy and positivity! You are replacing the dark with the light, setting the intention for all that is good! You are being courageous in letting go of negativity. You are Choosing Love!” Encourage students to refer back to this page when they need a boost. And remind them that they can practice this exercise at anytime.



LESSON 3: Focused Awareness

Strategies to Talk Back to the Lizard

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Identify the benefits of focused awareness
- Define focused awareness.
- Practice a mindful minute.
- Define rest and relax technique.
- Practice rest and relax technique.
- Identify body signals to show the 'fight, flight or freeze' response.

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Responsible Decision Making

Educator Prep

Write the following equation on the board:

Being Focused = Full Attention = Full Awareness = Full Presence = Better Ability and Decision-Making.

- Post the following on the board
 - I've got this.
 - I am courageous.
 - I face difficult situations with courage.
 - I have the strength and love to stand up for what is right.
 - I have important ideas to share.

- I will do my best today.
- I have the courage and ability to face any challenge.
- I choose positive thoughts over negative thoughts.
- I am strong and full of courage.
- I choose love.
- I am in control of me.
- My fears won't stop me.

LESSON

“Find a comfortable position to sit or stand. We are going to take a Mindful Minute. Just a minute of our time to relax our bodies and minds and focus on something specific for one minute. Close your eyes if you're comfortable, or look down, and focus your attention on your thoughts for one minute. Without trying to change them, just notice what thoughts pop into your head during this time. Become aware of the thoughts that come to focus.”

“Researchers suggest that, on average, people have 50,000 to 70,000 thoughts per day. That's a lot of thoughts! No wonder it can be difficult to focus at times. We can be easily distracted from the present by thoughts about the past or future. It's hard to focus on our school work or other important things in our life if our minds are distracted by all of these thoughts and the feelings they generate in us. It's challenging to clear our thoughts and minds and be present in the moment, but it can greatly benefit us.”

“Today we are going to look at different ways to be in the current moment.”

FOCUSED AWARENESS

“Focusing our awareness, or Focused Awareness, is a skill that we'll practice today and at other times in this program. This skill helps us to truly understand what's happening in a given moment.”

Refer to the equation on the board: Being Focused = Full Attention = Full Awareness = Full Presence = Better Ability and Decision-Making.

“This is a helpful skill because you can apply it to any situation and use it really anytime.”

“You can use focused awareness to improve your performance in a game, like when you need to make the hit or score the winning goal.

“You can use it to enhance communication in a relationship or friendship, so you can get along better.

“You can practice focused awareness before a big test, to get your brain cleared and ready to be present and give your full attention and ability to the test.

“You can use it to be aware of and better manage your emotions, which will help you keep your cool and make healthy, positive choices to benefit you and others. It’s all about directing your attention or focus to being aware of something to relax/calm you or something specific to benefit you in a circumstance.”

“Michael Jordan used to focus his attention on the ball going through the hoop as he practiced, before games, and even during games. He cleared out all other thoughts, all other distractions, and put his focus on his goal of sinking the shot. He set his mind to visualizing the outcome he wanted, the ball going into the basket over and over again. And it improved his ability to play basketball and score many baskets.”

“What are some situations that you might want to give your full attention to?”

Allow for some discussion. You can even write these on the board and/or have students jot them down in their journals.

“Let’s practice moving our attention and focusing our awareness. For the next 30 seconds, close your eyes and focus your awareness on your breathing. Notice, without trying to change anything, what your breathing sounds like. Are you taking shallow or deep breaths? Are you breathing quickly or slowly? Don’t change anything, just notice it. Focus on it.”

“Now focus your attention on the distance between you and the person next to you. Notice how close or far away they feel. Notice, without changing anything, how that person is sitting.”

“Did your body change at all after you began paying attention? Did you start to breathe more slowly? Did you sit up taller? Did you move closer or farther away from someone? Or did you not feel any change at all? Was your mind less distracted as you focused

specifically on something? Was it easy or difficult to focus your awareness?" Allow time for processing and reflection before continuing.

"You can also focus your awareness on things that aren't physically present. Focus your awareness on someone who is not in this room right now. You might think about what they look like, what their relationship is to you, and how they make you feel."

"Time is not a constraint either. You can focus on past or future events, like an upcoming test or game, or last year's championship. What are your thoughts about the upcoming school year? How do you now feel about an elementary school experience? The bottom line is that you are in control of your thoughts, your attention, your focus, your awareness, and even your feelings. You have a lot more control than you realize and with some little tips and skills, you can gain even greater control over these things to benefit you and help you be the best you can be."

"Focused awareness, just like anything else, takes practice. So start by using this skill at least one time a day, maybe first thing in the morning to get the day started out in a positive way. Remember, this is a chance to focus your attention and be in the moment. Focus your awareness on clearing your mind of negative thoughts, and focus your attention on the positive in the here and now. Then begin using it more often and at particular times when you feel it would benefit you....like before a challenging or stressful situation and when you need extra courage and focus."

Rest and Relax

Another focused awareness exercise is called REST and RELAX. Just like in math, there are many ways to solve problems, and in Focused Awareness we have many strategies. It's important to try each and choose which one feels right to you. Some may love our mindful minutes, while others may choose rest and relax. It doesn't matter what you choose, as long as your mind and body transition to the present moment to support your growth!"

Focus first on your hands.

1. Clench your fists tightly for a few seconds -hold for the count of 3 seconds, counting them out – 1, 2, 3. You may wish to progressively hold for 4 seconds, then 5 or even more. Make sure you are able to do this reasonably comfortably.
2. Release the tension all in one go – make sure that the tension is released all at once with a feeling of floppiness at the end.
3. Repeat this with your hands and lower arms.
4. Repeat this with your hands and your whole arms.

5. Repeat this exercise with your feet, then feet and lower legs, then feet and whole of legs.
6. Finally hold the muscles of your entire body tense, hold for the count of 3 and at 3 release all tension from your body.

“When we try to have courage, we might feel afraid or anxious. We may also be confused or uncertain. When this happens, our bodies get tense, our hearts start beating faster, and we might start breathing more shallowly and rapidly. These are just a few of the ways our bodies tell us that we are scared. What are some other ways that your body lets you know when you are afraid or anxious?” Discuss and reflect as a class. Write examples on the board and have students list these in their journals for self-awareness. Examples may include but aren’t limited to the following: face flushed, tight chest, clenched jaw. body feels hot, stomach upset or uneasy, feeling fidgety or jittery, shrinking or slumping body posture, eyes widened.

“We want to be aware of these body signs and pay attention to them so we can do something to feel better and not get overwhelmed by these feelings. It can be hard to make good choices and decisions when our bodies feel this way. We want to teach and train our bodies to rest and relax so that we can relieve our body of these nervous, tense feelings. When we relax, we feel more confident and are able to make the best decisions, even if we are scared and anxious. Let’s practice this valuable skill.”

“First take another slow, deep Brave Breath. Now, on the count of three, squeeze all of your muscles as tight as you can. Ready? 1-2-3 squeeze! Hold tightly...” Hold for 3 seconds. “...and release.”

“Let’s try again. Ready? 1-2-3 squeeze your muscles! Hold... (hold for 3 seconds)...and release. Feel the difference between when your muscles are tight and when they are relaxed and loose.”

“Finally, let’s check our bodies to see if there’s any area we need to relax one more time. If your body is like a rope, is it tightly wound, about to snap, or is it loose? Close your eyes. Are you feeling relaxed? Your feet? Your legs? Your back? Your stomach? Your chest? Your hands? Your arms? How about your shoulders? Your neck? Your head? Your jaw? And your face? If there is any place that it still tense, let’s squeeze and relax it one more time. Ready? Go!”

“There’s one last tip for calming down that I’m going to share with you to complete this lesson. You can also signal your brain to calm down by relaxing your tongue. Throughout the day, if your tongue is pressing against the roof of your mouth, pause and focus your attention on relaxing your tongue. You can stick out your tongue and wiggle it around or just wiggle it around in your mouth. You’ll be surprised at how using that simple technique can calm and relax you and reduce your stress, anxiety and tension immediately!”

Affirmations

“We are going to practice some positive self-talk by creating and saying some affirmations. An affirmation is a statement we repeat to ourselves to help us focus our attention on something we want to do, think or feel. Affirmations can calm us and help us stay focused on doing the right thing and achieving our goals. When we repeat positive affirmations about courage, it puts our human brains to work and helps us build our courage muscles.”

“Here are some examples of affirmations... These can be read aloud and/or written on the board.”

- I’ve got this.
- I am courageous.
- I face difficult situations with courage.
- I have the strength and love to stand up for what is right.
- I have important ideas to share.
- I will do my best today.
- I have the courage and ability to face any challenge.
- I choose positive thoughts over negative thoughts.
- I am strong and full of courage.
- I choose love.
- I am in control of me.
- My fears won’t stop me.

“Affirmations can help us overcome fear. They can help us be in control of our thoughts and feelings and set our intentions in a courageous and positive way. Affirmations build our confidence, help us face challenges, help us make good choices, and help us achieve and succeed. For instance, if you are nervous about speaking in front of a class you could say, ‘I am a confident public speaker.’ If you are about to play in a big game or take a big test you could say, ‘I’m ready and focused on doing my best.’”

“What are some additional examples of affirmations?” Have students share some of their examples and write them on the board.

“Whenever you are feeling anxious and tense, you can use the Rest and Relax skill or a mindful minute of focused awareness. This may be before a test, before a big game or event, in a situation where you are uncertain or fearful...or anytime you are tense and tightly wound. You can target specific parts of your body. You’ll find that you probably carry tension and stress in specific parts of your body more than others. So you can focus on the areas that seem the most tense to you or do a whole body rest and relax like we just did. Picture the rope in your mind, imagine loosening a tightly wound rope as you rest and relax your body. This is something simple you can do anytime, anywhere and no one even has to know you are doing it. You’ll find practicing Rest and Relax, Brave Breaths and Focused Awareness, really helps you move past and overcome your nerves, stress, and fears!”

Call to Action

In your journal, write down at least 5 affirmations that you can use this week to boost your confidence and courage, to help you overcome difficult feelings, and to help steer you to make good decisions and reach your goals. Repeat these to yourself daily and at times when you really need focus and strength.

1

EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY:

Brave Breath

Educator Preparation

Preview the following video which demonstrates the Brave Breath. You can also show this to your students before doing this as a class.

Video: [Brave Breath](https://safesha.re/iue) (https://safesha.re/iue)

Lesson

Option to show Brave Breath video here ([Brave Breath](#)) before you start.

Brave Breath SLIDE

https://youtu.be/fsbgLq7bBoU?list=PLsu5l-S0kxLJSdRN3_-gSi0i4RrmYjSei

“Today we are going to start to learn about ‘controlling’ our brains by practicing the Brave Breath. Brave Breaths help us to calm down, move past our fears, and have courage. They also help our brains and bodies get ready to learn. You may have learned about this last year, but don’t worry if you did not. I will talk you through it. Now we are going to practice relaxing our bodies. When we are looking to gain courage it is typically during a time when we feel uncertain or scared. When we are stressed mentally or afraid physically, the muscles in our body become tense. We can learn how to relax our bodies and train our muscles to be relaxed so that when it is time to be courageous, we are ready to be focused and calm.”

“First, place your hand on your belly, just under your ribs but above your belly button. This is where your diaphragm is. Your diaphragm helps you breathe, sing, and calm down. When you breathe with your diaphragm, it enables your body and brain to show courage.”
“Next, place your other hand on your heart. See if you can get quiet enough to feel your heart beat. Now close your eyes. Let’s start relaxing our bodies. Start by inhaling. Take a slow, deep breath in, and count to four in your mind. Feel your belly get bigger, and full of

air, like a balloon. Rather than expanding your chest when you breathe in, focus on expanding your belly. Now count to four and slowly breathe out.”

“Let’s do that again. Relax and inhale and feel the belly rise. Breathe in deeply and count to four. Let your belly fill up like a balloon. Then exhale and count to four, feeling the belly fall. As you breathe out feel relaxation all the way down to the tips of your toes.”

“Think about how a balloon floats and rises above all things, and how when we are courageous, we, too, learn to rise above things that challenge us. Being courageous is an act of rising up. Let the Brave Breath remind you to rise up and be courageous.”

“Let’s take one more Brave Breath together. Slowly breathe in and breathe out. Allowing your whole body to relax, just sit with your eyes closed and remember a time when you were courageous. It can be a time you stood up for yourself or shared your feelings. It may be a time that you were courageous toward someone at home or at school. Maybe it was saying ‘no’ or helping someone who was being bullied. Close your eyes and envision the time that you were courageous. Remember what you felt like after you practiced this act of courage.”

“Great job! When we use this specific type of breathing, it sends a signal to our brains to calm down and decrease fear, stress, anxiety, or any other strong feeling like anger. Brave Breaths help your bodies relax, help your emotions calm down, and help your brains get ready to think clearly and make good decisions. You can use them any time you want to focus, relax, and have courage. Practicing Brave Breaths can help us keep positive attitudes. Just like practicing math, sports or an instrument, the more we practice, the better we get. So keep practicing so you’ll get better at this important breathing skill.”

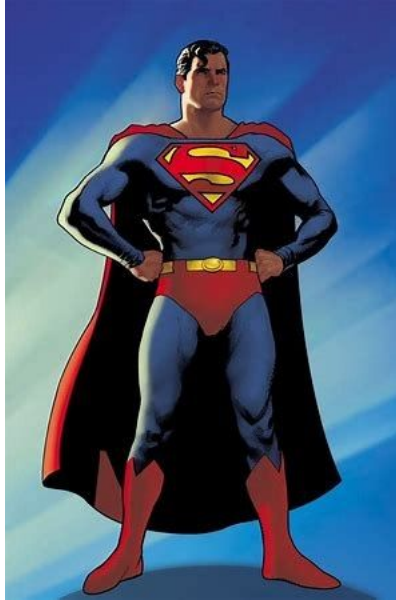
Ask the students how breathing made them feel. Encourage them to do the Brave Breath on their own. Remind them that anytime they feel anxious, upset or uncertain they may do their Brave Breath. You may wish to start each class with a Brave Breath and/or cue students to use them at specific times.

2

EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY: COURAGE POSE

Educator Prep

- Preview school psychologist [Amy Cuddy's TED talk](https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are?language=en#) about how your body language shapes who you are and helps you manage feelings and thoughts in a powerful and positive way.
(https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are?language=en#)
- You may choose to show some or all of the video to your students as part of this lesson or an extension of this lesson.
- Create your own Brave/Courage/Power Pose. If you are uncertain about how to demonstrate a pose, search online for sample images of power poses. They typically resemble a Superman or Wonder Woman stance: feet shoulder width apart, hands firmly on hips, shoulders pulled back, and head tilted slightly up. They should be open and expansive. Students may be uncomfortable using a power pose, and they will look to you as a model.



Additionally, you may choose to read the [Harvard research article on the benefits of power posing before high stakes social evaluations](https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/9547823/13-027.pdf?sequence=1).

(<https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/9547823/13-027.pdf?sequence=1>)

Lesson

“One way to deal with feeling anxious, worried, uncertain, and fearful and to strengthen our courage is to practice courage poses. We may also call these brave poses or power poses. A courage pose is a way of sitting or standing that increases your courage and confidence. It’s based on Amy Cuddy’s TED Talk about Power Posing. Posing in this way changes your body chemistry by increasing testosterone and lowering your cortisol levels. That change helps your brain and body move from fear to courage.”

“Do you want to see my courage pose?” Show students what your pose looks like.

“Just by looking at me, how would you say I am feeling? How would you describe me?” Responses should include: happy, confident, courageous, powerful, strong, bold, important, etc.

Then show them the opposite pose, something where your arms are crossed, body hunched over, head down, legs and arms very loose and limp, posture very closed, guarded, and weak. Ask them to describe how you are feeling or what kind of person you

are. Responses should include: weak, scared, nervous, anxious, sad, uncomfortable, not confident, lacking courage, defeated, not capable, worried, etc. This is a good way for them to see the difference and see the benefits of the courage pose.

“Everyone, take a minute or two to find a sitting or standing pose that helps you feel strong, confident, and courageous. It might feel silly at first, but researchers have shown that practicing a courage pose can help your brain and body move from fear to courage and confidence.”

“Typically, you might spread your feet, roll your shoulders back, lift your chin or head slightly, hold your arms wider than you normally do. No parts of your body should be crossed or closed off. You are not hunching. Imagine there is a string pulling your spine very tall and straight. You may have your hands on your hips and have your feet very firmly planted on the ground, looking much the way SuperMan or Wonder Woman might look. But make this pose your own. Try out a few different postures before deciding which one feels right and best to you. Make sure you can hold your pose for at least one minute without getting hurt or tired. And make sure you are smiling!”

Once the students have had a few minutes to create their poses, “Let’s all practice our poses together. First we’ll try holding it for 15 seconds. Ready, Go!”

Practice again for 30 seconds, and then one minute. Tell students that the pose works best when held for two minutes.

“Nice work! Keep practicing and you’ll get more comfortable and better at this pose. Any time you want to increase your courage, use a courage pose. These are especially helpful before performances, tests, games, interviews, and public speaking.”



LESSON 4: Fear and Courage

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Students will interpret a video clip and reflect on what courage really is.
- Students will distinguish between acting “tough” and showing true courage.
- Students will identify their strengths and weaknesses as part of having the courage to show their true selves.
- Students will identify things they can change, things they can’t change, and courageous actions for change.

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Self Monitoring
- Social Awareness
- Responsible Decision Making
- Relationship SKills

Educator Preparation

Have the following clip from the **Wizard of Oz** available: (Cowardly lion clip) [The Cowardly Lion - The Wizard of Oz \(6/8\) Movie CLIP \(1939\)](https://safesha.re/hij) (<https://safesha.re/hij>)

LESSON

“People think that courage has to do with being strong, tough and aggressive, but courage is more than that. Courage is really opening up and letting people see the real you. Courage is being able to admit your weaknesses. Courage is believing in yourself, even when others don’t. Courage is having hope and positivity, even when things in life are challenging. Courage is trusting yourself and others.”

“We are going to watch a clip from the movie the Wizard of Oz. While we are watching, think about what the characters are showing and telling us about courage. What important lessons are they teaching us about courage?”

Have students view the following Wizard of Oz video clip: [The Cowardly Lion - The Wizard of Oz \(6/8\) Movie CLIP \(1939\)](#)

Discuss and reflect as a class. **“So, who wants to describe the lion for me?”** Scared, cowardly, anxious, pretending to be brave, being aggressive and a bully to look strong, etc.

“Do we all feel that the lion was ‘cowardly,’ or not showing courage?”

“In the beginning of the clip, the lion seems to be brave. Was he really brave? Why or why not?” No. He was being a bully and acting aggressive to try to feel strong and powerful. He was making others feel afraid so that he might feel better about himself.

“Is there a part of this clip in which the lion is actually brave?” When he opens up and is honest with them about his true feelings. When he admits to them that he is a coward and is afraid of everything. When he trusts them to help him. When he truly connects with others.

“Is the lion confident, or sure of himself?” No, he is really insecure. He tries to cover it up by acting like a bully and trying to intimidate others.

“Showing courage is not about being tough, trying to hurt or scare others, or trying to bully or intimidate others. That doesn’t show strength, but rather, it shows fear and weakness. When we have courage, it doesn’t mean we aren’t afraid. It doesn’t mean we never feel scared, nervous, worried, or sad. It takes more courage to walk away than to fight.”

“Having courage means we are honest in our feelings and actions. It means we let go of our fears and show our true selves. When we have courage, we always try to do what is right and show our best self, no matter the circumstance. We manage our feelings and replace fear and doubt with a belief and confidence in ourselves. Having courage isn’t easy. Some people think that only certain strong people have courage. But we all have courage inside us. We just have to ‘leave the lizard, nudge the numbat and hug the human’. We need to change the negative messages in our minds, and replace them with positive, confident, empowering messages. We need to listen to the courageous voice inside us.”

“One of the reasons that we practice courage is because it can lead to confidence, and confidence can lead to academic and life success. Confidence empowers you and helps you set goals and reach them. How are courage and confidence different?” Courage is the willingness to proceed despite fear and uncertainty, while confidence is the faith or certainty in your ability to do something and be successful.

“By developing our courage, we can move to a place of having confidence in ourselves. How does increased confidence benefit you in school and in life?” Examples include: reduced stress, more positive attitude, increased ability to focus, willingness to try new things, gives you the faith to persevere even in the face of adversity, gives you strength and hope, motivates and inspires you, helps you work towards and achieve your goals, etc.

“Today we are going to have the courage to be authentic and share our true selves. I will pass out sticky notes. You will write down all of the qualities you like about yourself on sticky notes. What are you good at? What are your strengths?”

It might not be easy for students, but assure them that they are not bragging...this is supposed to be an honest activity and they should feel safe.

“Now I’d like you to put the sticky notes all over your shirts. Save a couple blank sticky notes. You will find a partner and share some of your strengths and positive qualities with them. Then when both have shared, each of you can write a few compliments or things that you like about the other person to add to their positive traits/strengths.”

Allow students a few minutes for this activity.

*Due to social distancing, this activity can be adapted to have students put their post it notes on a desk or on a wall and students can walk to their partners notes, scattered from the others, to complete this activity.

“Now I’d like you to put all of your sticky notes in your notebooks on one page. Keep these as reminders of your strengths, talents, positive qualities and attributes. Refer back to them when you need a confidence boost. Remember it takes courage to have confidence in yourself....you are an amazing person!”

Call to Action

Pick a friend or family member and make 3-5 sticky notes of their strengths and attributes. Reminding others of what they are good at not only helps their confidence, but makes you feel good too!

1

EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY:

Facing Fears

“Today we are going to practice getting to the bottom of our fears. So first, we need to find a way to calm down so we can really look the fear in the face and see what it’s all about.

“Let’s take a mindful minute to focus our awareness through some simple visualization. Find a comfortable position to sit or stand.

“Close your eyes if you’re comfortable, or just look down and focus your attention on letting all of your fears be the air that blows and fills up a giant balloon. Blow all the air into the balloon that you can so it is full and huge. This balloon is now filled with all of your fears. Now grab hold of the balloon and throw it in the air. Watch the balloon fly farther and farther away into the sky so that you can no longer see it.”

“How do you feel? Did you let go of unnecessary fears and worries? Do you feel more relaxed? Can you focus and think more clearly once you’ve calmed down like this?”

“Then, some good questions to ask yourself may be:

(Write these on the board and ask students to copy them into their journals:)

- What signs are my body giving me to let me know that I’m fearful?
- How can I calm myself down so I can think clearly and make the best choice or action?
- Is this fear real or imagined/exaggerated?
- If it’s real, am I in danger?
- If so, what is the true threat level? Do I need help? Who can help me with this?
- If it’s not a dangerous situation or serious threat, do I need to take action or let it go?
- How can I show courage in facing this non threatening fear?
- What can I do to deal with this situation without wasting all of my energy on being fearful and anxious?

The following activity can be done as a class, in partners or in small groups.

Have a bucket with strips of paper with various fears written on them. Make sure these include both serious or potentially dangerous scenarios as well as non threatening situations or fears. Some examples could include: a real fire alarm goes off at school (this is not a drill), a fear of spiders, friends pressuring you to do something that could harm you, you have an exam coming up at school, you are trying out for a sports team, you have to speak in front of the class, there is a weather advisory alert on tv, a stranger is offering to give you a ride home, you're afraid of failing, etc.

Slips are picked out of the bucket and then the class, the partners, or the groups have to discuss the situation/fear answering the questions on the board in their journals. This activity allows students to develop body and feeling awareness. It also helps them understand how to work through fears in a healthy, positive way. They can develop plans to calm down to be able to make rational choices, to ask for help when needed, to be courageous and face fears, to take action or let it go as needed. If you do this activity in pairs or small groups, make sure to have students share their responses in the larger group in some fashion.

“Today we’ve become more aware of our body signals and our feelings. We’ve also learned some steps to take to help us address our fears in healthy, courageous, and positive ways. In your journals, jot down the questions we used for this activity so you’ll have them for future reference. Also, now or when you have a minute, write down a list of some healthy ways that you can calm down and face your fears.”



EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY: FEELING THROUGH POETRY

Educator Prep

- Have a copy of the poem 'Wall of Fear' by Penaia Rawasoi to share with the class. You may choose to write it on the board or give copies to students.
- Have a copy of the poem, 'Lessons of Courage and Fear' by Sean <http://www.pongoteenwriting.org/lessons-of-courage-and-fear.html>
- If desired, have copies of the poetry format sheet for students who wish to follow this format in lieu of creating their poem from scratch.

Lesson

"Today I am going to read you a few poems. The first one is on fear. While I'm reading it, think about what it's talking about. How does it make you feel? What message is it trying to convey to you?"

Wall of Fear By Penaia Rawasoi (Rawasoi, 2016)

Deep within the thick darkness. Of uncertainty and fear. The panic was real. Heart beat after beat was all you could hear. Your heart was all you could feel Terror was palpable. Hope was volatile

Sweaty hands and deep breaths dry lips and trembling so intense

Numbness so blinding shutting every thought stealing every word cutting every truth slamming every worth

Paralyzed!

What's Happening?

The answer is free but Freedom lies beyond the question: Who are you without fear?"

"What do you think about this poem? How does it make you feel? Did the author do a good job of describing how fear makes you feel? Why or Why not? What was the author's opinion of fear? Do you agree with the author's opinion of fear? Why or Why not? What

do you think the author meant by the line, 'who are you without fear?'" Answer these and any other questions as a class, allowing for discussion and reflection.

"Fear can really impact us both physically, like a racing heartbeat, and mentally, like thinking that you can't do something. But we discussed that fear is a normal emotion. It comes from the numbat part of our brain. We can either take that fear and send it to the lizard brain or to the human brain. The lizard brain is the one that is putting your body in the anxious, uncomfortable state and putting all of those negative thoughts in your head. So we have to do our best to send it to the human brain where we can calm ourselves physically and mentally and make rational choices so the fear doesn't paralyze us."

"I have another poem to share with you today. This one is called 'Lessons on Fear and Courage'. This was written by a student not too much older than you."

"Lessons of Courage and Fear By Sean – Age 16

<http://www.pongoteenwriting.org/lessons-of-courage-and-fear.html> (Lessons of courage, 2011)

In my life I've known Courage.

We met when I started overcoming my fears.

Nowadays Courage is me refusing to be scared. I find Courage when I find fear.

We met when I got scared.

These days Fear is me being afraid.

Fear finds me when I slip up.

I've learned that Courage and Fear are different

When Courage tells me to keep going, Fear says Stop right there.

Usually I listen to Courage. I wish courage came out more often.

I wish Fear went missing for good."

"How does this poem make you feel? What was the author's intention in writing this poem? What do you think his opinion of fear and courage is? Do you agree with his opinion and ideas about fear and courage? The first poet asked, 'who are you without fear?'. This author talks about fear and courage together saying, 'I find Courage when I find Fear'. What do you think he means by this line?" Allow time for discussion and reflection.

"Fear and courage are really two sides to the same coin. You really can't have one without the other. Fear moves you to have courage and courage helps you move past your fear. But fear and courage are opposites and they are competing for your attention and energy.

You have to decide which one you are going to be best friends with. Which one are you going to let win your affection, attention, and energy?"

"Now we are going to write our own poems about courage and fear. You can try writing one from scratch or use the format I provide you. It is all about when you 'met' courage and 'met' fear. Think about your life....how has fear been present and affected you and how you have been courageous!"

You can give students the poetry format page, you may choose a different format, or you may wish to just instruct them to use whatever format they wish for their poem. These poems will be used for a poetry recitation (poetry slam) during the next lesson so give students ample time to complete. This can also be assigned as a homework or extra credit activity.

POEM FORMAT

_____ (Title)

A poem by _____ (your name here).

In my life I've known Courage.

We met when I

_____.

Nowadays Courage is

_____.

I find Courage when

_____.

In my life I've known Fear.

We met when I

_____.

These days Fear is

_____.

Fear finds me when

_____.

I've learned that Courage and Fear are different.

When Courage tells me

_____.

Fear says

_____.

Usually I listen to

_____.

I wish

_____.



EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY: POETRY SLAM

Educator Prep

- You may choose to bring snacks and beverages and make the class like a “coffee house” setup.
- Have strips of paper or sticky notes for each student to write positive comments about their classmates’ poetry.

Lesson

“Today we are going to have a poetry slam. This will give us a chance to practice being courageous by expressing ourselves and sharing our poetry with the class. We will set our seats up like a theater and we will share our poetry.” You may choose to have the room already set up in this fashion or have students help set it up. You may wish to remind students of the Choose Love Classroom Constitution and highlight the behaviors the class agreed upon that they must demonstrate during students’ sharing such as listening carefully, being respectful, not interrupting, not making fun of others, being positive and encouraging, etc.

“I will get us started. Here is my poem (read this one or write one of your own):”

“Fear. Fear is present every day.

It just shows up uninvited. It burrows into your chest and breathes its wicked breath.

It is hard and brittle in your heart.

It makes you feel helpless.

Courage. Courage shows up but you have to summon it.

It starts in your feet and works its way up.

It makes you feel strong and confident. It is born out of love.”

“Now we will listen to some poetry from our classmates. We will each write a positive comment on a piece of paper to hand to the poet when s/he is done.” You may choose to

ask for volunteers to share their poems. Or you may pick names out of a hat to see who will share. Have the poets read the positive comments about their poem after everyone has shared.



EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY: FEAR OR LOVE

Educator Prep

Preview the following video which is a video showing an excerpt from a commencement speech given by comedian Jim Carrey about choosing between fear and love. Set the video up for students to view during the lesson: [Jim Carrey - Choose Love not fear](#)

Lesson

“We’ve been talking a lot about fear and courage. Today we are going to watch a short video clip. It is part of a commencement speech that comedian Jim Carrey gave at a graduation ceremony. He talks about choosing love over fear. Let’s watch it and then discuss.” Show video to students [Jim Carrey - Choose Love not fear](#) Afterwards allow for discussion and reflection. You may include the following questions to prompt discussion:

“What do you think he is trying to share in this speech? Do you agree? Why or Why not? How do these words relate to our learning about courage and choosing love? How could you apply this message to your life? How do you think your life would change by doing so? What would be the benefits?”

What are some fears that you need to let go of because they are draining your energy and holding you back? In your journals make two columns. On one side you will put FEAR and the heading for the other column will be COURAGE & LOVE. Under FEAR list all of the things that you fear that are holding you back and getting in the way of your happiness. Under COURAGE & LOVE write down all of the ways you can choose courage and love in your life. List things that will benefit you. You will also write down the following sentence:

I will let go of _____,
and I will choose _____.

Complete this sentence a few times with ideas that will make your life better and help you reach your goals!" Time permitting, ask for a few volunteers to share their completed sentences.



LESSON 5: Courage and Our Relationships

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Students will identify cooperative and non-cooperative behaviors.➤ Students will memorize the CALM Rubric as a problem solving tool.➤ Students will apply the CALM Rubric to scenarios.	<p><u>CSED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Moral Character➤ Performance Character➤ Intellectual Character <p><u>SEL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Self Awareness➤ Self Management➤ Social Awareness➤ Relationships Skills➤ Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

- Make copies for all students of the CALM Rubric that is in the Resource Section of the Program Download.
(C= Cooperate, A= Ask Questions, L= Listen, and M= Make Your Move.)
- Copy the scenarios sheet and cut the scenarios into strips. Give each set of partners or each small group a scenario. There may be more than one partner set or group with the same scenario. **Based on remote learning and social distancing, you may need to make a copy of the scenarios for each student to participate.

LESSON

“We’ve been talking about how individual people like you and me can have courage. Today, we are going to expand our ideas about courage. We are going to discuss how we can have courage in our relationships, in friendships, in teams, and in our class. When we have a relationship with someone, it means we are connected to that person in some way. We have a relationship with our parents, our family members, our teachers, and our friends. We have relationships with our classmates, too. We talk, play, work and learn together. We have relationships with people on our various teams too. We are constantly forming new relationships and maintaining current ones.”

“Relationships take a lot of courage, work and care, otherwise, they can go from positive to negative. What do you think it takes to have a good friendship? What makes a good relationship?”

Examples should include: listening to each other, caring about each other, sharing, playing fairly, helping others, respecting each other’s feelings and thoughts, speaking kindly, resolving conflicts peacefully, etc.

“Some of what you said sounds familiar. Did anyone notice similarities between what you said and what we wrote in our Choose Love Constitution?”

“One of the best and most important ways to show people that you want a positive relationship is to listen to them. How do you know if someone is listening to you?”

Write examples on the board such as: they make eye contact, their body faces you, they nod or respond to things you say, they acknowledge how you are feeling, they are focused on you and not distracted, etc.

“Just because you are friends with someone or have a relationship with someone, doesn’t mean you’ll always agree with them. You might have different feelings, thoughts, ideas and opinions. And that’s ok. In fact, it’s important. Our differences make us special. What would the world be like if we all had the same thoughts, feelings, ideas and opinions...pretty boring, eh? Our differences help us learn new things about each other, ourselves, and the world around us. Differences can be exciting and interesting, but they can also create problems. Often disagreements arise when we have different ways of seeing a situation and we aren’t willing to see or respect the other person’s perspective.”

“When we listen to each other, respect each other despite our differences, are open to other people’s ideas and thoughts, and have positive ways to work through differences and disagreements, we can have and maintain positive relationships and learn and grow. When you have a positive relationship, you can solve problems together in ways that are safe, caring, and respectful. But it takes courage to do this.”

“We are going to learn an easy way to solve problems. Just remember the word CALM.”

Write the following on the board: C= Cooperate, A= Ask Questions, L= Listen, and M= Make Your Move.

“The letter ‘C’ stands for Cooperate. What does the word ‘cooperate’ mean?” Listen to student responses.

“When we cooperate, we work together to solve problems, work, and play. Our lizard, numbat and human brains collaborate to help us have courage and make the best choices to work through differences and get along. What are some behaviors you would see if people are cooperating?” Examples include: sharing, trading, taking turns, smiling, listening, etc.

“What would you not see them doing?” Examples include: pushing, fighting, eye rolling, name calling, yelling, arguing, bullying, ignoring, etc.

“What do you hear when people are cooperating?” Examples include: kind words, questions, saying I’m sorry or please and thank you, etc.

“When you want to have a positive relationship with someone, or solve a problem, the first thing you do is choose to cooperate.”

“The next letter in our problem solving trick is A which stands for Ask Questions. This is a great thing to do to build positive relationships and solve problems in a healthy way. Here are a few questions that you can ask. Write them in your journals.”

“How do I feel?” “How do you feel?” “What do I see happening? What do I hear happening?”

“You can always ask more questions like: Why do you feel that way? How do you think we can resolve this? What are you willing to do?”

“Remember when responding to these questions you need to focus on what you see and not use accusations or judgments. For example, instead of saying, “She’s being mean,” you could say. “I was talking and she interrupted. I feel frustrated and ignored.”

“The ‘L’ in our problem solving stands for Listen. First listen to your own feelings when you ask yourself how you feel and make sure you are accurately expressing how you feel and what you are thinking. Listen to your lizard, numbat and human brains. Then really tune in to what the other person is saying. Pay attention to the things that you are both saying and feeling that are the same. What do you agree on and where do you disagree?”

“The final step is the letter ‘M’ which stands for Make Your Move. That means deciding what to do next. You are willing to cooperate, you asked questions, you expressed your thoughts and feelings and listened to each other. Now what should you do? This is where you come up with solutions together.”

“Now, we are going to practice using the CALM rubric for problem solving. You are going to be with partners. You will be given a scenario or a ‘case’. You are acting like problem solving detectives. Use the steps we discussed to get to the heart of the situation....figure out the problem and how you can cooperate to solve the case!!”

Break students into partners or small groups of your choosing (see educator prep for an alternate activity if social distancing must be maintained). Give partners/groups different scenarios or ‘cases’ on a strip of paper (print out the scenarios on the following page and cut into strips). Give them a copy of the CALM Rubric. Have them go through the CALM Rubric, writing down their notes in their journals like detectives, ending with their solutions to the problems presented. Allow time for partners to share their cases, findings, and how they solved the case and found solutions.

Call to Action

Share the CALM strategy with your family and friends. Notice when and how you can use it with your siblings, your teammates, your friends or any other important person in your life!

SAMPLE SCENARIOS:

You are in a cooperative learning group and some students in the group are not staying on task or being respectful toward each other. You feel nervous because you want to complete your assignment.

You are sitting with some friends at lunch and the conversation begins to make you feel uncomfortable. Your friends are asking you to join in the conversation.

You're playing basketball with friends. Somebody calls a foul on you and you're really upset about the call made against you. You think that the call is wrong.

You're running against a classmate for a class office. Your friend wins and is bragging to everyone about how she beat you.

You're with your best friend and she is pressuring you to make fun of a classmate on social media. You don't want to do it, but you're afraid she won't be your friend if you don't do what she says.

In PE class, your friend calls out, "You run like a girl.". You are upset and embarrassed. Your friend is acting like nothing is wrong.

Debrief Here- The CALM rubric is another tool in your Choose Love Toolbox. Can you visualize the next opportunity you will have to use this tool? Share out - partner, small, or whole group.

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EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY:

“Act Out”

Educator Prep

- Assign small groups ahead of time, if desired.

Lesson

“I have a question for you.....does courage just happen or is it a choice?” Allow for discussion and answers.

“The answer is that courage is a choice and a very important one. People who show courage understand the power of choice and make brave, healthy, powerful, responsible decisions. When we show courage, we choose to strengthen the regulation of our emotions and to promote our values, doing what we know is right, even if it’s scary or hard. It is a decision or choice that we make.”

“Our choices and thought processes have a tremendous effect on how we respond in any situation. Showing courage means we are choosing to be more aware of how we monitor our feelings, thoughts, actions and behaviors. Showing courage in any situation can help us get along better with others because we are choosing how we respond. We are nudging the numbat to leave the lizard and hug the human (Use the hand brain model here to remind the students of the parts of the brain). Knowing when and how to calm ourselves down and practicing our Brave Breath and Courage Pose is showing courage. When we choose to help, to support, to stand with and for people, to take action and to choose love, we are showing courage!”

“Today we are going to “Act Out” Courage. You will be working in small groups. I will give you a typical scenario that you might face at school or home. In small groups, create skits to show the scenario and ‘Act Out’ courage. Show how someone could use courage to handle the situation. If we have time, we will share a few skits with the class.”

Some scenarios could include the following:

What would a courageous person do if....

- 1)they notice someone picking on another student,
- 2) they are constantly being bullied by a peer,
- 3)their friends want them to participate in a dangerous act,
- 4)their friends say they won't be friends with them unless they do something they know isn't right,
- 5) they are nervous and worked up over an upcoming test,
- 6) they have tried to do or learn (fill in the blank) many times and always fail,
- 7) they are anxious over trying out for a play or sports team,
- 8)they are feeling self-conscious over the way they look,
- 9) they are trying to say no when feeling peer pressure,
- 10) they are in an uncomfortable situation, etc....

You may even want the students to come up with these scenarios themselves.



LESSON 6: Peer Pressure

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Differentiate between positive and negative peer pressure.
- Generate a list on how to handle peer pressure situations.
- Create a peer pressure organizer.
- Recite the Stand Your Ground steps to combat peer pressure.
- Create and act out peer pressure scenarios using the Stand Your Ground technique.
- Reflect on new learning related to courage from the current unit.

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Social Awareness
- Responsible Decision Making
- Relationships Skills

Educator Prep

- Cue the following video on Peer Pressure: [Peer Pressure](https://safesha.re/hik) (https://safesha.re/hik)

Lesson

“One of the most challenging things that you will deal with in your relationships is Peer Pressure. As you grow older you’ll have to make lots of decisions. Some are easy and don’t really have a right or wrong choice like should I try out for the basketball team or try out for the play? But you will also have many challenging decisions that will require you to think more carefully and clearly about your choices and have the courage to decide what is right and what is important.”

“These decisions are really difficult but what can make them more challenging is when you are trying to make them with added peer pressure. Peer pressure is a type of social pressure. It tends to happen mostly with teenagers and young adults....but it can happen to people of all ages. It is when you are directly influenced by others who are your same age... your peers. It is when someone feels pressured or influenced by their peers to do something that they might not otherwise do. Peer pressure may encourage us to want to follow our peers and act as they do or do something that they are doing.”

“We are always influenced by our peers just by being around them. And peer pressure can be positive. What are some examples of positive peer pressure?” Examples include: A friend helps you do better at school, a friend encourages you to try out for a sports team, a friend is nice to others and you try to be like them, a friend introduces you to new music or books that are really enjoyable, etc.”

“But other peer pressure is negative and can cause you to do things that can be harmful to you and others, and get you into all kinds of trouble. This kind of pressure often causes us to not use common sense or good judgment. It encourages us to change our behaviors, values, opinions, and beliefs, and do something that we know is wrong. Why do kids give in to negative peer pressure?” Examples include: To fit in, to be liked, to be part of a group, so they don’t get left out, so others won’t make fun of them, because everybody is doing it, because they are curious, because they are afraid they’ll lose friends if they don’t.”

“Showing courage is one of the greatest weapons you have to fight back against negative peer pressure. It takes courage to say ‘No’ when everyone seems to be saying ‘Yes’. It takes courage to stand your ground and stick to what you believe is right and good. We are going to watch a short clip about some ways to deal with peer pressure.”

Watch the following video clip: [Peer Pressure](#)

“This video gave you some tips for dealing with negative peer pressure. Let’s list some of these and then add to this list. As a class, make a list of some ways to deal with negative peer pressure.”

Consider doing some brainstorming first - whole, small group, or partners before individual

“Now in your journals I’d like you to draw a line down the middle of a page vertically. Then draw a line through the middle of the page horizontally.”

“You should have 4 boxes on your paper. In the first box, write ‘FEEL’. In the second box write, ‘THINK’. In the third box write, ‘SAY’, and in the last box write, ‘DO’.”

“Think of a time when you have been peer pressured or think of a scenario where someone may try to pressure you to do something you know isn’t right. Fill in the boxes writing down how you feel, what you think, what you can say, and what you can do in that situation. Take a few minutes to fill in your boxes and then let’s share.” Allow time for sharing, discussion and reflection.

“We are going to end our time today by learning the Stand Your Ground tips to help you deal with peer pressure. I’ve written them on the board and I’m also passing out a sheet that has them on it. I’m going to break you into small groups and you are to create a peer pressure skit that shows someone using the Stand the Ground tips to handle the situation in a positive, healthy, courageous way. I hope we’ll have time to share some of your skits! Remember to Stand Your Ground!”

Allow time for students to create and practice their skits. Time permitting, ask for a few groups to have the courage and share their skits.

STAND YOUR GROUND Ask yourself these questions

1. ‘Is it right?, Is it necessary?, Is it kind?, Is it safe?’
2. If the answer is NO, then it’s negative peer pressure and you need to say NO!
3. Use a Courage Pose- to boost your courage and confidence

4. Make Eye Contact- to set your attention and focus
5. Use a Calm, but Strong Voice- to keep your cool and to show you are serious
6. Say NO Clearly and Loudly- to be firm and let them know where you stand
7. Suggest Something Different- to distract and change the focus
8. Repeat NO- to let them know you are confident in your decision and not changing your mind
9. Leave if they won't accept NO- to show you are committed to your decision

“In our few weeks together we’ve covered everything from courage, to fear to relationships to peer pressure. Courage can take many forms and the emotions we feel are all important and serve a purpose to us in some way. Let’s reflect together on what we’ve learned so far in our courage journey. What are your takeaways?”

Allow for student responses. You may choose to capture this new learning on a visual chart to keep in the classroom as a reference.

Call to Action

Write a brief letter.....to yourself. Picture yourself as an adult.....perhaps the age of your mom or dad. Have your adult self write a letter to your 6th grade self encouraging you to be Brave, giving you advice and inspiration to handle what’s going on now and what may come your way. No one has to see this letter. Write it in your journal and keep it to encourage, strengthen, and comfort you when you need it.

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EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY:

Serenity Statement

Educator Prep

Write this portion of the following on the board (see below):

“(I) have the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, The courage to change the things I can, And the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time; Enjoying one moment at a time; Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace...” -Reinhold Niebuhr

LESSON

“I am going to read you part of a serenity statement, But first let me tell you what serenity means. Serenity is a state of being when you feel calm, tranquil, peaceful, and untroubled. Does that sound like a way you’d like to feel? I think we all would enjoy that kind of peace.” Read this part of the ‘Serenity Statement’ to the class. After, discuss and reflect on its meaning using some or all of the following questions:

What is the meaning of this statement? Do you agree with what the author is saying? Why or Why not? Do you think people can change? Why or Why not? How? Why does it take courage to change?

“This statement gives us a good plan for facing our fears and hardships, showing courage, and finding peace. And it’s really simple if you think about it. There are four steps.”

“First, there are many things in life that we can’t change....they just are what they are...and we have no control over them. We can spend a lot of time and energy worrying about these things, fighting these things, and being held back by these things. But in the end, that’s wasting physical, emotional and mental energy and focusing too much attention on things that will never change. It’s fighting a losing battle.”

“Then, there are the things we can change, the differences we can make. But it’s not always easy to change. We have some behaviors and habits that we’ve been doing for a long time and we are comfortable and used to them, even if they are not helping us be the best we can be. Sometimes we are our own worst enemy in the ways we act and the choices we make. It takes a lot of courage to admit our mistakes, look at our weaknesses, and highlight the habits we have that are holding us back and making our life more difficult than it needs to be. And then, it takes even more courage to say, ‘I don’t like the way I am acting or the things I am doing and I’m going to change it!’. It’s very courageous to take action to make a change for the better!”

“Third, we must focus on this moment and enjoy what’s going on. Sometimes we get too worried about what happened in the past or what may or may not happen in the future, that we don’t get to see and enjoy all the good stuff that’s happening right in front of us right now. We have to let it all go and find the good in this moment.”

“Finally, it ends by saying, ‘accepting hardships as the pathways to peace’. In other words, life is full of difficult, challenging situations and times. Struggles and obstacles are part of life and we will stumble. If we look at these things as falls and failures, we get frustrated and stuck. When we see these things as chances to learn and grow, we reach new heights, become stronger and more confident, and feel happy and at peace.”

“Copy the ‘Serenity statement’ in your journal. Then make three columns. The first should say, “CANNOT CHANGE”, the 2nd column should be titled “CHANGE”, and the last column should be titled, COURAGEOUS ACTIONS FOR CHANGE We are going to fill in these columns on our own, but let’s get started with a few ideas.”

“What are some things we cannot change?” Ideas should include: Bad weather, other people, what other people say and do, your family, going to school, etc. Brainstorm a few ideas together and then have students write some ideas down in this column.

“What are some things you can and would like to change? Remember there are lots of things you can change and these lists may be different for everyone.” Examples may include: Your attitude, your thoughts and feelings, how you treat others, how much effort you put forth, how much you study for tests, your grades at school, the friends you have, your mood, how courageous you are, how you speak to others, how much you pay attention, how you treat others, how hard you work, how much you help others, etc. Brainstorm some ideas and then have students make their own list in their journals.

“Now put a star next to, circle, or underline the things on this list that you’d like to focus on changing. You can’t change everything at once, but you can focus your attention on one or two things that you are going to have the courage to take action to change.”

“Now think about some things you can do immediately to work on changing those behaviors or things from column 2. In the last column, COURAGEOUS ACTIONS FOR CHANGE, write down some ideas or steps you can readily take to make these positive changes.”
Give students a few minutes to jot down some ideas. Circle around and give some ideas if they are stuck. Time permitting, see if anyone is brave enough to share the changes they want to make and the courageous actions they are going to take to change.



LESSON 7:

WRAPPING UP COURAGE

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Identify people who are courageous role models.
- Recognize the characteristics, traits, and behaviors of courageous individuals.
- Create 'Courage is' poems.
- Design portraits of courage highlighting themselves as courageous role models.
- Write intentions for themselves for the school year and list steps to fulfill these intentions.
- Contribute to a time capsule to be opened later in the year to reflect on their growth and accomplishments.
- Receive the 'Gift of Courage' as they review what they've learned through the Courage Unit.
- Play a cooperative game to celebrate the end of the courage unit.

SEL Model Standards

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Skills

Educator Prep

- Put Courageous Role Models as a heading on the board.
- Preview and Cue the following video on Nick Vujici
- [The most inspirational video you will ever see Nick Vujicic](#)
- Included in this lesson are the profiles of some courageous role models. However, feel free to find and substitute your own profiles of particular individuals that you would like to highlight. The idea is for students to have a few strong examples of individuals who show courage and can be a role model for them. The following article gives some good examples of profiles of courage:
<https://www.themuse.com/advice/9-famous-people-who-will-inspire-you-to-never-give-up>
- You may want to have additional books/sources to give students more information about these role models.
- Several poster boards or large pieces of chart paper taped around the room.
- Break students into small groups ahead of time.

LESSON

“We’ve learned a lot in our exploration of courage. We are going to be talking today about courageous role models and the qualities they share. I am going to show you a quick video clip of Nick Vujici. He is an amazing profile in courage and someone who is very inspiring!”
Show the following video clip: [The most inspirational video you will ever see Nick Vujicic](#)

“Nick gives us a great perspective on our own lives. Nick has extreme physical limitations as he has no arms or legs. But he has not let this define who he is or hold him back from living a full and active life. He has chosen to use his disabilities as an example for others. You couldn’t really blame him if he chose to give up and not put himself in the public eye or engage in life. I’m sure he endures stares and unkind comments from others. I’m sure he has moments of feeling weak and insecure. I’m sure he has gotten frustrated along the way and wanted to give up.

“Yet, Nick doesn’t let his fears stop him. He married, has children, and is a successful author and speaker because he had the courage to accept his differences and see his obstacles as opportunities. He found meaning in his circumstances and used it to help others. He is an amazing profile in courage and very inspiring!”

"We're going to brainstorm a list of people that you think of when you think of courage and explain why you think they are courageous. This list can include types of people or specific people. Make sure you think of and include people in your life that exhibit courage. First make your list in your journal and then we'll create a list on the board." For example: Policemen, firefighters, armed forces, athletes, doctors, presidents, Rosa Parks, John Glenn, Martin Luther King Jr., Gandhi, etc. Have students make a list in their notebook and then as a class create a list on the board.

"Did you put yourself on the list? You should! You are brave in many ways. Just showing up and engaging in class is showing courage."

"I am going to read you a few more profiles in courage. Listen closely and think about the characteristics of these individuals. What do you notice about them? How do they carry themselves and show themselves to the world?" Read the profiles provided at the end of this lesson or those of your choosing. Other good examples include: Martin Luther King Jr., Amelia Earhart, Anne Frank, Gandhi, etc. Students will enjoy hearing the profile of a popular current role model such as an athlete, musical artist, or actor. You may even pick characters from literature incorporating books they are currently reading in and out of school. The following article gives some great examples of profiles of courage:

<https://www.themuse.com/advice/9-famous-people-who-will-inspire-you-to-never-give-up> this is not working

This is really powerful and great...

[Powerful Inspirational true story...Never give up!](#)

COURAGEOUS ROLE MODELS

"We are going to find out more about what it takes to be a courageous role model. I am going to break you into groups. In your groups I'd like you to brainstorm and list on your paper all of the qualities or behaviors that these role models have in common.

What does a courageous person look like, sound like, act like? How do courageous role models exemplify courage? Make sure you answer these questions and those I've listed on the board and record your answers. Write these and/or other specific questions you want them to answer on the board.

What is their personality like? What are some adjectives to describe them? What strengths did/do they have? What did they accomplish? Why are they inspiring? How did acting courageously help these people and those around them? What lessons can they teach us?" Examples might include: hard working, strong, honest, confident, bold, able to confront fear and uncertainty, strong values, clear goals, determined, compassionate, independent, faithful, make good choices, thoughtful, responsible, help others, see challenges as opportunities, don't give up, don't listen to criticism, etc."

Allow time for groups to share their thoughts and ideas with the class.

"Look at these lists you've created. Take a minute to make your own list in your journals of what it takes to be a courageous individual. Refer back to this list and remember the profiles in courage we've heard today when you need a boost of courage, confidence, and inspiration!"

Profiles in Courage

Hellen Keller and the quote

"Hellen Keller was a baby when she contracted a viral infection that made her blind and deaf. She suffered tremendously in her early years, unable to communicate with most people and unsupported and shunned by most of society who were able-bodied. When she was six years old, Hellen Keller met a teacher named Anne Sullivan. Anne did not treat Helen as incapable, as many other people did. Because of this trusting and loving relationship they developed, Helen felt safe and courageous enough to challenge herself and others. She eventually became an author and one of the greatest inspirational teachers of all time. She said, 'We could never learn to be able to be brave and patient if there were only joy in the world.'"

Victor Frankl and quote

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.

"Viktor Frankl was a neurologist and psychiatrist in Austria before he became a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp during World War II. During his imprisonment he endured the most horrific conditions and physical and mental abuse and torture. He watched those around him be killed.

He chose to retain hope that he would survive and be reunited with his family after the war was over. He spent his time studying other inmates' behavior, and witnessed extreme acts of compassion under the hardest circumstances. He realized how important choice is in our lives, and that even during the worst of circumstances we still are empowered to choose how we perceive the situation and how we respond.

Viktor found meaning in his suffering by learning important lessons, which he eventually shared in books and teachings. One of the most important lessons was that one can find meaning and hope in even the most horrible situations, which allows one to endure and move forward.”

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EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY: INTENTIONS IN A TIME CAPSULE

Educator Prep

- Have index cards available for students to write down their intentions. These will be placed in a time capsule to be opened at the end of the school year or designated later date.
- Create a time capsule for these intentions. You can use a safe, a decorated box that can be closed, a jar that can be sealed or an envelope of some sort.

Activity

“It can take courage to dream big. Today, we’re going to talk about intentions. An intention is a vision or dream you have for the future. It is a commitment you make to yourself, similar to a resolution.”

“An intention defines the direction you want your life to take and why you want to move in that direction. Goals define the steps or path to get there.”

“For example, an intention I have for this year is....” Examples could include: to be healthier, the decrease anxiety/worry/stress, to become a better student, to get along better with others, to learn a new skill or subject, to improve in certain areas of school or activities such as art, drama, sports, etc.

“I plan to fulfill my intention by...” Examples could include: taking a class, practicing more, studying, working out, asking for help, practicing yoga or meditation, paying better attention, trying harder, listening to others, believing in myself, etc.

“You will probably have several things you can do to help you fulfill your intention. Has anyone ever set an intention before? In what ways did having an intention benefit you?”

“Take a few minutes to set an intention for this school year. Write your intention down in your journal

like this:

My intention this year is to _____
because _____
_____ " "

For example, My intention is to feel healthier because I want to have more energy. Or, my intention is to get better at playing soccer so I can get a college scholarship. You may wish to put an example on the board.

"Your intention can be for your own growth or something that impacts your school or community."

"Next, write down some mini goals or steps you can take to fulfill your intention. Complete this sentence in your journal, 'To fulfill my intention I can...'. And then, you can complete the sentence or make a list of the steps that will help you achieve your intention."

"It takes courage to set goals and intentions and to take the steps to make them happen. Receiving support in achieving our goals and intentions has a big impact on whether or not we are able to follow through with them. We will each identify two accountability buddies who will support us in meeting our intentions. Before the end of the day, choose two people and tell them your intention. Write their names in your journal. This should be people that you can talk to and trust. It could be an adult or a close classmate/friend."

"I am going to hand out an index card and I'd like to have you copy everything that you wrote down in your journal onto this card...your intention statement and the steps you will take to achieve it. We will be creating a time capsule. We will put all of your intentions in this capsule. I will enclose and hide these cards away until the end of the school year or later in the year. At that time, we'll remove these and look back on them. It will be interesting to look back on these intentions and see if you've fulfilled them and/or how far you've come in achieving them."

Collect all of the index cards and place them in your designated "time capsule". This could be a safe, a box or jar that can be sealed/closed, or simply a large envelope. Keep this sealed and in a safe place. Make sure you pick a specific date to open it and reflect with the students. This could be at the end of the year or midway through the year.



EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY: CELEBRATING COURAGE

Educator Prep

- • Preview the game instructions below or play your favorite cooperative game.
- • Make copies of the worksheet provided entitled, 'The Gift of Courage
- • Have tape on hand or yarn to tie paper plates to hang around their necks.
- • Have Paper Plates for each student

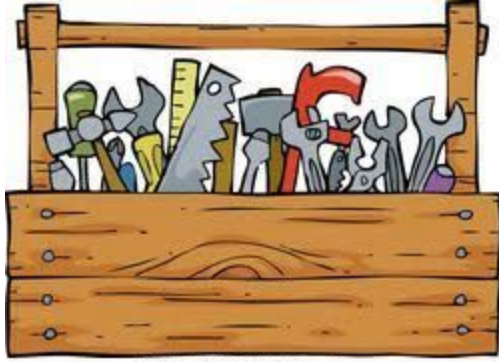
LESSON

"We are going to take a mindful minute to begin today. Find a comfortable position to sit or stand. Close your eyes and focus your attention for one minute on a time when you had a lot of fun!"

"Today we are finishing the Courage Unit, so it's cause for celebration. We are going to take a minute to review what we've learned in a fun way. Then, we are going to play a game to celebrate our accomplishment- all that we have learned, the courage that we have and the courage we will show in the future."

"To start, each of you is going to get a paper plate called, 'The Gift of Courage'. You will tape this to your back or attach yarn and hand it around your neck. I will turn on some music and you will walk around to different classmates and have them write something important they learned in the courage unit on your gift box. Think about the following:

- What skills and tools do you have in your toolbox? (We're using this in elementary and they're doing something similar in high school for the teachers.)



gg74473417 GoGraph.com

What is something you learned that you think will have the most positive impact on your life?

- What is a skill you learned that you think is very beneficial to you to use?

3, 2, 1

- What are the three most important things you learned in this unit?

- What are two things you learned about courage?

- What is the one tool that really stands out in your mind and heart?"

Allow a few minutes for students to travel around the room and fill their 'Gift of Courage' papers. These can be put in their journals or they make take them home and post to remind them of the important things they learned during the unit.

"We've learned a lot about courage and a lot about ourselves. But the learning doesn't stop here. We are just beginning. We'll be moving on to the next part of the Choose Love Formula which is Gratitude. I hope you'll continue to learn more about courage through research on the internet, finding role models, reading books, poems, and stories of courage. And remember you have courage...you just have to listen to the courageous voice inside you. If it's too quiet, turn the volume up and listen more closely....don't let your fears or worries stop you....find your courage and let it shine!"



Sixth Grade| [GRATITUDE](#) |Overview

UNIT 2: GRATITUDE

Students learn that gratitude is mindful thankfulness and the ability to be thankful even when things in life are challenging. When you practice gratitude you feel thankful and want to share that feeling with others (Donaldson, Dollwet & Rao, 2014). Research has shown that the benefits associated with gratitude include better sleep patterns, increased levels of happiness and optimism, a sense of connection to peers and communities, and decreased levels of anxiety and stress (Donaldson, Dollwet & Rao, 2014). Gratitude influences sleep through the mechanism of pre-sleep cognitions. These benefits have positive impacts in the lives of students, and they help cultivate safe and thriving classroom cultures. “Gratitude” exercises help students become actively thankful for everyday situations and opportunities (Lomas, Froh, Emmons, Mishra & Bono, 2014).

LESSONS

Lesson 1: Core Values

Lesson 2: Rewiring Your Brain for Gratitude

Lesson 3: The Benefits of Gratitude

Lesson 4: Color Me Grateful

Lesson 5: The Law of Attraction

Lesson 6: Celebrating Gratitude

EXTENSION LESSONS

Ext Lesson 1: Footprints

Ext Lesson 2: My Superhighway

Ext Lesson 3: New Habits

Ext Lesson 4: Gratitude Gateway

Ext Lesson 5: Gratitude Quotes

Ext Lesson 6: A Master's Lesson

Ext Lesson 7: The Magic Word

Ext Lesson 8: Gratitude Character

Ext Lesson 9: Self Care

Ext Lesson 10: Laughter Is The Best Medicine

Ext Lesson 11: Light A Flame

Ext Lesson 12: Time Capsule Check-in

Ext Lesson 13: Compliment Cafe

Ext Lesson 14: My Thank You Speech

Ext Lesson 15: How Can I Give Back?



Lesson 1: Core Values

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- define gratitude
- generate a personal gratitude list
- compare and contrast the benefits of gratitude
- construct a list of core values
- reflect on core values and connect to daily life

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

- Write the Choose Love Formula on the board: **'Courage + Gratitude + Forgiveness + Compassion in Action= Choosing Love'**
- Write the definition of Gratitude on the board: **'Gratitude is mindful thankfulness and the ability to be thankful even when things in life are challenging.'**
- Prepare [Core Values worksheet](#), either by showing image or printing/distributing.

Lesson

"Let's take a mindful minute. One minute to get present and focus our thinking, warm up our brains to learn and feel centered. Close your eyes and focus your attention on something you believe in. Think about one important thing you believe in for one minute while breathing slowly and steadily."

“Gratitude is the second character value in the Choose Love Formula. What does Gratitude mean to you? Write down all of the thoughts and words that come to mind when you think of the word, ‘Gratitude’.”

Share responses.

“Gratitude is mindful thankfulness and the ability to be thankful even when things in life are challenging. You can be grateful for almost anything: people, places, things, ideas, feelings, experiences, relationships, nature, or learned ideas. Examples could be: The breath you take, a sunny day, friendships, special teachers, a roof over your head, a special talent, a family member, your favorite song, a great dinner. When we are grateful and practice gratitude regularly, we actually are happier and feel better. We will conduct simple research as we go through this unit.”

Some effects could be:

- Feeling happier
- Improving relationships
- Improving health
- Being more optimistic
- Improving self-esteem and confidence
- Improving resiliency
- Increasing energy levels
- Relaxation
- Improved sleep
- Making new friends
- Reducing stress
- Helping face and work through problems more effectively and more easily

“When you practice gratitude you feel thankful and want to share that feeling with others. When we have an ‘attitude of gratitude’ we are choosing a character value that benefits us in many aspects of life.”

“What do you think a character value is?”

“Values are a set of principles that guide your thoughts, feelings and behaviors. They are beliefs that help determine right from wrong. Values are very important in helping steer our decisions and help you choose what kind of person you want to be.”

“The activity we will work on today will point out important core values. On the board is a list of core values. Take a couple minutes to read the list of common values and choose the 12 that are most important to you. Write the 12 in your journal. What core values do you want to steer your thinking, your decisions, your behaviors, and your life?”

Allow a couple of minutes to pick 12 values.

“Now out of those 12 you picked, pick your top 8 by crossing off the 4 that don’t make the cut.”

“Now pick your top 4, by crossing off 4 more values.”

“Does anyone want to share their 4 most important core values?” Allow time to share.

“How do you think identifying your core values might benefit you?”

Examples might include:

1. helping with a difficult decision, forming the basis for your character
2. Help shape the person you are and want to be, boosts your confidence in yourself as you have a strong sense of who you are,
3. Help you choose what’s right for you, when you know your values you can see what’s guiding you and make changes to your values if necessary, etc.

“Remember, your core values aren’t permanent unless you want them to be...you can change your values so that they better reflect who you want to be and what direction you want your life to take. Make sure you add love, courage, and gratitude to your list to be the best you can be!”

Call to Action

Share your core value list with a family member or friend. Show them the image from class and ask them to pick 12 then 8 then 4 core values. Did they pick the same values as you? Why or why not? What made them choose the 4 they did?



Lesson 2: Rewiring Your Brain for Gratitude

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- analyze the neuroscience of practicing gratitude
- examine the benefits of rewiring neural pathways for gratitude
- critique complaints and cite how to initiate the habit of being grateful
- rewrite complaints into gratitude statements

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Responsible Decision Making

Educator Prep

This article is recommended before, during or after the lesson or as support for you, the educator: [Complaining Rewires the Brain, How To Stop](https://tinybuddha.com/blog/complaining-rewires-brain-negativity-how-to-stop)
(<https://tinybuddha.com/blog/complaining-rewires-brain-negativity-how-to-stop>)

You may also wish to show or reference parts of this article when describing dopamine: [How To Increase Dopamine Naturally](https://bebrainfit.com/increase-dopamine/).
(<https://bebrainfit.com/increase-dopamine/>)

Print/distribute the [Gratitude Breath Card](https://chooselovemovement.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/GratitudeBreath_LetterSize_v2.pdf).

(https://chooselovemovement.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/GratitudeBreath_LetterSize_v2.pdf)

Lesson

“We are going to begin today with a new type of breathing technique, the Gratitude Breath.”

(Reference [Gratitude Breath Card](#).)

“Gratitude Breaths help us feel safe, calm and happy. These breaths inspire, encourage and restore us when we are feeling down or negative. Taking these breaths remind us of all of the good in our lives and not to dwell on the negatives.”

“Close your eyes. Place one hand on your heart and one hand on your diaphragm. Take a slow, deep breath in and fill your diaphragm with air. Then slowly breathe out.”

“As you breathe the warm air in, think of one thing you feel grateful for. Might include: family, friends, sports?”

“Take one more Gratitude Breath, and let your face relax. As you breathe out, imagine sharing that feeling of gratitude and happiness with the whole world.”

“How do you feel after practicing Gratitude Breaths? How is your body feeling?”

Encourage sharing and field responses.

“Now that we are focused and our bodies are calm, let’s talk about what happens in our brains when we practice gratitude and how it can help us.”

“When you are grateful, the brain releases a neurotransmitter called dopamine. Dopamine lets us feel excited, happy and content, concentrated and focused, and is in charge of our pleasure and reward system. Without it you can feel tired, depressed, and lacking energy.”

“There are things we can do to increase our levels of dopamine like listening to music, doing creative activities and hobbies, eating well and exercising as well as mindfulness

and meditation. Showing gratitude is another way to increase dopamine.”

“Research has shown that the benefits of gratitude include better sleep patterns, increased levels of happiness and optimism, greater connection to peers and communities, and decreases in anxiety and stress (J. Psychosom Res. 2009; Chen, L.H. & Chang, 2014).”

“Did you know that it’s difficult for our brain to focus on both positive and negative stimuli at the same time?”

“Remember that neuroplasticity, changes in thinking, emotions, and behaviors, will change neural pathways and synapses in our brains. We can change our wiring and wire ourselves for positive feelings, for happiness, for gratitude!”

“Also remember that you are the boss, and you get to decide what to do with the information your brain shares with you. Thoughts can become our actions and our actions can become our habits.”

“It’s important that we choose our thoughts wisely and carefully. You can team up with your human brain, your neocortex, to help choose your thoughts. Decide what to focus your attention on to help you feel better, make good choices, and act in positive ways that will help you achieve your intentions and goals.”

“Studies have shown that it takes an average of 66 days to form a habit (van Jaarsveld, Potts, and Wardle, 2010). Let’s create a new, healthy habit! Set the intention to have a more positive outlook on life because it will make us healthier and happier. Once a day, we can choose to replace a negative thought pattern with a positive affirmation. Over time, if we continue to do this, it will become a good habit that will empower us and move us forward in positive directions.”

“How can choosing your thoughts benefit you?” Answers should include: Helps you focus, helps you be more self-aware, gives you more control, helps you change how you feel and act, builds your confidence as you get rid of negative self-talk, positive thinking inspires more positive actions/ choices to achieve your goals, helps you get unstuck in a negative thought pattern.

“Negative thought patterns often involve complaining. We will practice converting our complaints into appreciativeness, which is far more productive, positive, and healthy

thinking.”

“Make a list of three complaints you have right now on a piece of paper or in a document on your device.”

“Now, in a separate column, convert each of your complaints into gifts of the present-something you appreciate or are grateful for.”

Be open to sharing your own complaints and model how you would change those into appreciative, grateful, positive thoughts. Allow time for volunteers to share.

“Over the course of this unit, we’ll practice showing gratitude in multiple ways so you can decide which is your favorite way to practice it.”

Call to Action

Find two opportunities (or more) when you find yourself thinking negatively and stop to rework the scenario to focus on the positive. How did you feel before reviewing the scenario? How did you feel after focusing on the positive? Share your new learning about neuroplasticity with a family member or friend!



Lesson 3: The Benefits of Gratitude

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Examine the benefits of gratitude
- Cite the benefits of a Gratitude Journal
- Create gratitude mantras/affirmations to cue a shift to a positive mindset.
- Draw nature scenes to calm a personal inner landscape

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Responsible Decision Making

Educator Prep

- Preview and cue the following video, '[The Amazing Effects of Gratitude](https://youtu.be/_sokh9e2WGc)':
(https://youtu.be/_sokh9e2WGc)

**Note: Another good video explaining the benefits of gratitude is, "Gratitude is Good For You". You may choose to show this video to your students as well.*

<https://youtu.be/sCV-mEsASLA>

Lesson

"Let's start our time today with another gratitude breath. Close your eyes. Place one hand on your heart and one hand on your diaphragm. Take a slow, deep breath in and

fill your diaphragm with air. Then slowly breathe out.”

“As you breathe the warm air in, think of one thing you feel grateful for. As you breathe out, imagine sharing that feeling of gratitude and happiness with the whole world.”

“We’ve been learning about gratitude and discovering some of its benefits. Being grateful is scientifically proven. Gratitude helps us feel good mentally and physically and helps us stay positive which helps us interact better with others, make better choices, and handle adversity better.”

“It’s easy to lose sight of the good things in our life when we have struggles, problems, and negative experiences. We can get caught up in negative thoughts and feelings. If we stop, take notice, and become more aware, we realize we have so much to be grateful for each moment of each day. We have to make it a practice, a new habit....and make time for gratitude.”

“One way to do that is through a gratitude journal. We are going to watch a short video called, ‘The Amazing Effects of Gratitude.’ This will explain the benefits of gratitude and keeping a gratitude journal.”

Show the video: [The Amazing Effects of Gratitude](#)

Allow time for brief discussion and reflection after the video.

“Journaling is an exercise that helps us put our thoughts and feelings on paper. It can help us remember things that happened, organize our ideas, express ourselves and make sense of our experiences, lives and the world around us. Keeping a journal is an effective way to empower yourself and to take control of your thoughts, feelings, and outlook.”

“What do you think some of the benefits of keeping a gratitude journal are?” Allow for responses.

“Here is a list of some benefits you may experience:

- Lower stress levels
- Feel calm
- Gain a new perspective

- Helps you focus on what really matters
- Gain clarity on what you want more of in your life
- Become more self-aware
- Learn about yourself
- Focus
- Changes negative thoughts to positive thoughts
- Rewire your brain
- Reframe your current situation
- Helps you overcome challenging thoughts, feelings and experiences

“On days when you are feeling down and challenged, you can read back through your gratitude journal. Practicing gratitude gets the dopamine flowing in your brain which helps you focus, improves your mood, and reduces your stress....so this will make you feel better!”

“It is OK to give thanks for the material things we own such as clothes or sneakers or iPads. It is also important to remind ourselves to show appreciation for those things that are free such as the people in our lives, noticing the world around us, happy moments and experiences, and things we take for granted like seeing, breathing, and walking.”

“In your journals let’s start this practice by taking a few minutes to make a list of some things you feel grateful for.”

Allow students time to create their gratitude list. If students would like to share, encourage them to do so with the group.

“Let’s create a mantra that we can use to immediately put ourselves in this gratitude space when we need to. A mantra is a sound, word, or phrase repeated frequently by someone to focus their attention....to channel their mind and body...their thoughts, feelings, and energy. Other synonyms include: slogan, motto, catchphrase, or buzzword. They can be positive and motivational little sayings.

"What will your Gratitude Mantra or affirmation be? Think of a sound, word, or phrase that will be your cue to take a moment to practice gratitude. Write this mantra down in your journal and decorate it in a way that makes it stand out and that reflects how you want that mantra to direct your thoughts and feelings in a positive way that creates

happiness for you.”

End class with students sharing their Gratitude Mantras.

“Great work today! Remember, we can’t always choose what happens but we have the power to choose how we respond. Our Gratitude Mantras and our journals help us respond in a healthy, productive way!”

Call to Action

Kurt Beil, a naturopath, says ‘Any exposure to nature, even if it’s looking at photos of landscapes, will trigger a PNS response that calms your own inner landscape’. PNS is your brain’s Parasympathetic Nervous System and it is a very important system that helps you battle stress and anxiety.

Your call to action is to take a nature break. Find a beautiful nature scene such as a beach, a lake, a mountain or forest landscape in an image or in real life. What nature scene makes you feel calm and relaxed?



Lesson 4: Color Me Grateful

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Engage in a flashlight focused awareness activity
- Highlight what happens when practicing gratitude.
- Use color as an inspiration for finding gratitude.

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Responsible Decision Making

Educator Prep

- If possible, have a flashlight on hand to reinforce the focused awareness activity and discussion.
- Prepare the following colors on printed paper or on a digital board; red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, white, black, brown, pink and grey
- Print or have [“What’s Your Color” sheet](#) available for student reference.

Lesson

“In the courage unit, we practiced a skill called, ‘focused awareness’, which means we put all of our attention on something in particular and really hone in on it.”

“Focused awareness is just like using a flashlight. What do we use a flashlight for?”

Allow for responses.

Turn off all of the lights and have a flashlight on in the room. Demonstrate how the flashlight illuminates different objects in and around the room. Have students say what different things are being identified and highlighted by the flashlight.

“How do you think the flashlight connects to gratitude?”

Allow for student responses. Gratitude lights the way to help us focus on the positives in our life, just like a flashlight lights our way and focuses on one object at a time.

“Now we are going to do a visualization exercise together to get a really clear idea of what practicing gratitude is all about. Close your eyes and imagine a big warehouse. You walk in the door and it’s completely dark so you can’t see anything. You have a flashlight in your hand and you turn it on. Point it directly in front of you. Suddenly you can see something. You see big boxes. Then you point the flashlight upward and you notice a huge ceiling fan spinning. Now you can’t see the boxes, only the fan.”

“You can choose where to shine the flashlight. Don’t forget, what you choose to shine the flashlight on is what you will see clearly and strongly... this will be what most influences your attitude, outlook, thoughts, feelings and behaviors.”

“When your world seems dark, you always have the ability to shine your flashlight on something you are grateful for.”

“Now let’s take a our visualizing to the next level. Did you know that there are researchers and psychologists that study colors? The colors we like and are drawn to can have a lot to do with our past and experiences. Some say colors can reflect our personality, outlook and mood. I am going to give you a quick test...a color test. Take a minute to complete it.”

During this test you will show a picture of various colors and have students write down their initial reactions to the colors. The reactions are only for the students and to analyze their reactions later in the lesson.

*The colors to have prepared are; red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, white, black, brown, turquoise, pink and grey. *

“What colors were you drawn to?”

Allow for a few to share, including yourself then hand out the “What’s Your Color” handout or display on the board for students. Have students connect the colors they were drawn to with its description. Students can also connect the colors they didn’t respond to with its description.

“The color you chose may or may not be an accurate description of your personality. It’s fun to see what it says and reflect on it. Maybe it’s more accurate than you think. Maybe colors do influence how you feel about the world around you and yourself. Colors can be soothing, uplifting, and motivating....they can bring us peace, energy or happiness.”

Have students share, or take a consensus of the class on what colors resonated with them.

Call to Action

Pick a color that makes you feel full of gratitude and optimism. Put that color in your mind. Notice or spot that color everywhere you can find it all day. When you notice your ‘gratitude color’, immediately let your mind and heart be full of gratitude. Let that color remind you to be grateful and fill you with gratitude and positivity!



Lesson 5: The Law of Attraction

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Cite the law of attraction and how it applies to gratitude.
- Synthesize a list of what to attract in life.
- Use words and images to illustrate and describe what to attract in life.
- Describe the good in others
- Examine how receiving compliments makes one feel emotionally
- Connect giving and receiving compliments with gratitude

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

- Preview and cue the following video: [The Law of Attraction](https://youtu.be/2lMqKdKzXzs). (<https://youtu.be/2lMqKdKzXzs>)
- Students will each need one piece of blank paper and tape for a compliment carousel activity.

Lesson

“What happens if you are watching TV and you don’t like what’s on?” Students should say they change the channel.

“That’s right! You just change the channel. Believe it or not, you have a remote control for your thoughts, too. If you don’t like what’s on your mind, change the channel. Practicing gratitude is an easy way to change the channel and steer your thinking in a positive direction.”

“Let’s change our brain channel today. We are going to focus our attention and create some pictures in our mind of the ‘most perfect day’. Close your eyes for a minute, and focus your thoughts on your ‘most perfect day’. In your mind, see what that looks like. Who is with you? Where are you? What are you doing? How do you feel? Let yourself focus your attention and see in your mind every detail of this ‘most perfect day’. Notice every little thing about it and let yourself be full of peace and contentment in this ‘most perfect day’.”

“Has anyone heard of a concept called the Law of Attraction?” Allow for responses.

“The Law of Attraction suggests that what you focus your attention on grows or multiplies. The energy that you send out comes back to you. For example, the more you focus on the test and your nerves, the more stressed you are! Can you think of other examples of the law of attraction?”

“Let’s watch a short video on the law of attraction.”

Play video: [The Law of Attraction](#)

“What do you think? Do you believe in the Law of Attraction? It certainly will make our lives better to have positive thinking. We can change our thoughts from negative to positive. The Law of Attraction doesn’t take the place of making the right choices, taking positive action, and working hard to achieve our goals. It does get us on the right path.”

“Let’s put this into practice! We’re going to take positive action and work on seeing the good in others in our class. I want you to take out a blank piece of paper and

write your name on the top. I'm going to take all of the papers and place them around the room. Your job is to walk around and write one kind word phrase or compliment to describe the person.

Allow students to walk around or you can separate the pages around the room and carousel students to maintain social distancing.

Ask for volunteers to share words that made them feel especially good. Also, discuss how reading these kind words and giving these kind words/compliments to others made them feel.

Call to Action

Share the gratitude! Create your own compliment page for someone you care about in your life. Be sure to share the page with them and focus on how complimenting others and showing how grateful you are for them makes you feel!



Lesson 6: Celebrating Gratitude

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Cite the importance of showing gratitude
- Highlight people to be grateful for personally
- Synthesize a top ten list citing the ways in which one can spread positivity and promote an attitude of gratitude.
- Review topics and learning targets related to gratitude
- Engage in cooperative games to celebrate the end of the Gratitude Unit.

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

- Preview the game instructions below or play your favorite cooperative game.

Lesson

“To start today, we’re going to practice a mindful minute. Find a comfortable position to sit or stand. Close your eyes and focus your attention for one minute on a time when you felt great happiness. Picture where you were, who you were with, what you were doing, what you were thinking and feeling. Enjoy that moment for a minute.”

“Let’s review what you’ve learned about Gratitude. In your journals, write down what you’ve learned in this Gratitude Unit. What stands out to you? What has impacted you the most in this unit?”

Allow a few minutes for student reflection. Then break students into groups. Each group will brainstorm and list on chart paper or poster board, all of the things that they have learned from this unit. Some questions for them to answer are:

- What ideas, terms, exercises and activities from this unit had the biggest impact on you? Why?
- What are the most important things you learned about gratitude?
- What stands out to you the most from the lessons in this unit?

After, each group will have a chance to present their lists to the larger group. Allow students a chance to copy down some of the information shared by the groups as review.

“We are going to end our gratitude unit by playing a game to celebrate our accomplishments. We’ll celebrate all that we have learned, the gratitude that we have, and the gratitude we will show in the future.”

Play the following game, or one of your choosing. Anything to get the kids relaxing and having fun to celebrate the end of this unit.

Gratitude Share: Write the following questions on a piece of paper, fold them and have students pick one from the bowl. Their responses will be shared with the larger class. Or you can break the class into smaller groups for this activity.

- Describe something lucky that happened to you and how your life improved.
- Describe a peak experience you've had. What made it special?
- Describe a special favor you received, how did it help you?
- Describe a special talent/gift that you have. How do you use it?
- Name someone who makes your life better and why.
- Describe something that you do often that makes you happy.
- Describe something that happened to you this past week that you are grateful for.
- What is something you have done that you are particularly proud of?

Gratitude Pictionary: Instead of drawing movie titles and traditional Pictionary ideas, students draw something they are grateful for. All the same rules apply- no words, letters or numbers; 60 second time limit; once a word is guessed, play goes to the other team. This can be played with the whole class broken into two or more teams, or played in small groups.

“Lastly remember having gratitude seems so simple, but it’s so important..... it shapes your thoughts and how you see and feel about your life and world. Keep positive....and even if sometimes you feel like you are in the dark, keep looking for and finding the light that is always there!”

Call to Action

Write a Gratitude Letter to someone important to you. Pick the person you are most thankful for at this moment. Write a paragraph or two letting them how grateful you are that they are in your life. Let them know what they mean to you. Thank them for the ways in which they have positively influenced and impacted your life. Once you've completed this activity, share your letter with the person you wrote about. See if you experience more positive benefits in doing so.



Grade 7 | **GRATITUDE** | Extension Lessons

EXTENSION LESSON 1:

Gratitude and the Heart

Educator Prep

None.

Activity

“Gratitude is a simple, but powerful practice. We’ve learned about the many benefits of practicing gratitude. It can have a positive impact on all areas of our lives. It can even positively impact our heart and the hearts of those around us.”

“The heart has an electromagnetic field that extends five feet from the body, This field is 60 times greater in amplitude than the brain (Heart Mind Institute, 2010). Stress and anxiety make these waves shorter and more erratic. When you practice gratitude it smooths out the heart waves and makes them more consistent. Positive thoughts created this effect on the heart as well, but feelings of gratitude made the most impact.”

“The technique to measure the magnetic fields produced by electrical activity is called magnetocardiography.”

“Let’s experiment with this. Everyone stand up and spread out throughout the room. For 60 seconds think of something that brings you stress. Notice how your body reacts.”

“Now find someone to stand next to. Position yourself as close to the person as you feel naturally comfortable. Take note of how you feel and how your body feels.”

“Now separate and shake it out. How did it feel to stand next to someone when you were agitated and stressed?” Students should notice that they may have felt more agitated and annoyed standing next to someone when they were stressed. They may have felt anxious and irritated and wanting to keep their distance rather than be close to another individual.

“Now focus your attention on something that you feel grateful for and hold that feeling for 60 seconds. Notice how your body reacts. Standing next to the same person, position yourself as close to them as feels naturally comfortable. Note how you feel and how your body feels in this instance.”

“How did it feel to stand next to someone when you were practicing and feeling gratitude? Did it feel different than before? How so?”

Students should notice that after practicing gratitude they felt closer to or more connected to the person who they were standing next to.

“Remember that practicing gratitude has a positive impact on our heart and the hearts of the people around us. It can bring us closer to others, create and strengthen connections, which in turn, makes us feel happy and good. Be mindful of the electromagnetic field that extends five feet from your body.

“What energy are you spreading...positive or negative?”

“Remember that practicing gratitude smooths out our heart waves and helps us spread positivity.”

“Next time you are feeling stressed, upset or irritated, place your hand over your heart for a quick moment and be grateful. Think of a few things that you are grateful for and let that shift your energy.”

“In your journals, draw a picture of yourself and then your heart waves extending from you. Write down or draw what different things you want to spread from you.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 2:

Gratitude on the Brain

Educator Prep

- Preview and cue the following video: [Gratitude on the Brain](http://www.scientificamerican.com/video/gratitude-on-the-brain/)
(<http://www.scientificamerican.com/video/gratitude-on-the-brain/>)

Activity

“We’ve talked a little bit about the benefits of gratitude. But today we are going look more closely at this, particularly, what happens in our brain when we practice gratitude.

“Gratitude initiates a cycle of good thoughts and feelings in your brain. When you are grateful, the brain releases a neurotransmitter called dopamine that makes a person ‘feel good.’ It is also associated with rewards or pleasure. With that in mind, it makes sense that the release of dopamine would make someone want to do what caused that good feeling again!”

“The more gratitude a person shows, the more active the brain’s hypothalamus becomes. While the hypothalamus controls bodily functions such as drinking, eating and sleeping, it also plays a significant role in balancing your metabolism and stress levels.”

“It is very hard for a brain to focus on both positive and negative stimuli at the same time. That means that if you are grateful, your brain will be focused on good things, making no room to think about the not so great things. It’s like packing a suitcase....if the suitcase is already packed, you can’t put anything more in it.”

“A brain focused on gratitude will release dopamine, an organic chemical that helps us regulate emotions, and then look to repeat that action by looking for something else to be grateful for! Through neuroplasticity (or changes in the neural pathways and synapses in our brains due to changes in our behavior), we can actually change the wiring in our brain and rewire ourselves for gratitude!”

“Let’s watch a video on the neuroscience of gratitude. Let’s take another look at what’s happening in our brain when we practice gratitude!”

Show the video: [Gratitude on the Brain](#)

“Think about what is happening in your brain when you practice gratitude. Imagine how the ‘feel good’ chemicals are releasing and flowing in your brain every time you think, feel and express gratitude. See if you can feel this in your body. Does gratitude feel good to you?”

“Each of you will get a picture of a human brain. Use markers, colored pencils, or crayons and your imagination and creativity to illustrate what happens in our brains when we show gratitude. Use bursts of color and design to show all of the action occurring in the brain...the hypothalamus activating, the flow of dopamine, the positive neural pathways taking shape, the rewiring of your brain. Try to imagine what this might look like and illustrate it in the most colorful way that you can!”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 3:

Gratitude Doors

Educator Prep

- Make copies of the [‘Gratitude Door’ worksheet](#).
- Have art materials available such as crayons, colored pencils, and markers.

Activity

“When forming a new habit, it’s helpful to set reminders to reinforce the new thinking and attitudes, behaviors, and neuropathways throughout the day.”

“One simple way is to create a gratitude gateway- something you pass through frequently that can remind you to practice gratitude.”

“For our class, I am designating our classroom door as a gratitude gateway. Anytime you walk through the door, think about at least one thing that you are grateful for. Let’s get ourselves thinking positively. Let’s do it right now. One at a time, I’ll call you to get up, walk out of the room, and re-enter the class. When you do, think of at least one thing you are grateful for....and you must smile. Smiling changes your thinking and attitude right away too!!”

Allow a few minutes to have each student practice this exercise. Ask them if they now feel different? Better? Happier?

“Identify a gratitude gateway for yourselves. You can choose a screensaver on your computer of something you are thankful for or a password that reminds you of gratitude. Pick a gratitude gateway at school like your locker or a specific hallway, window, door, or room that you frequently pass by. Then pick a gratitude gateway at home such as your front door, your bedroom door, your mailbox, or another door, window or spot in your house that you pass by often. Write down these spots in your journal. These are cues to remind you to be grateful.”

“We are going to go one step further and create our own gratitude doors. I am going to pass out a sheet with a door on it. You are to decorate the door and area around it with words, images, and colors that make you feel happy and good and remind you to practice gratitude.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self management

EXTENSION LESSON 4:

A Beautiful Day

Educator Prep

- Preview and cue the following song, '[A Beautiful Day](https://youtu.be/gvJdjQ2IHQk)' by U2:
(<https://youtu.be/gvJdjQ2IHQk>)

Activity

“Let’s get started today by listening to music. That always makes me feel good. Watch the following video clip, '[A Beautiful Day](https://youtu.be/gvJdjQ2IHQk)' by U2:”

“How did that song make you feel? What message did you get from the lyrics? Take a minute to reflect in your journals.”

You can have students share some reflections and/or respond to these questions in a class discussion.

“As we continue to practice changing the way we think and practicing gratitude, it’s very important to remember to be thankful in the moment. Instead of waiting for a moment to be grateful for, we are thankful for and find things to appreciate in this very moment we are in.”

“Here is a quote I think is pretty powerful. Let’s write it in our journals.” Write the following quote on the board:

‘Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift. That’s why it’s called the Present.’

“Pretty crazy to think that there will never be another day like today. That makes this day very special, that makes it a ‘Beautiful Day’.”

“Today we will practice focused awareness by focusing our attention on this day. Close your eyes and focus your thoughts on this beautiful day. Relax and take one or two deep gratitude breaths. Think of all of the reasons that make this day so special and beautiful.”

“Now open your eyes. There will also never be another moment just like this. Let’s focus on this one moment in time, the present. Look around the room and outside the classroom window.

“Let’s use 4 of our senses to help you develop an appreciation for this moment and your immediate surroundings. Often we take our senses, the moment, and our immediate surroundings for granted...we don’t stop and pay close attention to them much. Right now, look around you and pay attention to what you hear, see, touch and smell.

“In your journals make 4 columns labeled SEE, TOUCH, SMELL, AND HEAR. In each column write down as many things as you can that you appreciate using that sense.....what are the things that are pleasant to look at, smell, touch, and hear? Using these senses, take notice of the things that make you feel happy and good that are right here, right now.

“Let your senses help you practice gratitude and change your thoughts and outlook in this moment.”

“Remember that you can do this exercise anytime. Stop to appreciate this moment, this day. As they said in the song, ‘it’s a beautiful day, don’t let it get away’.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 5:

Gratitude Glasses

Educator Prep

Display and distribute [Gratitude Glasses worksheet](#).

Activity

“Dr. Wayne Dyer, an best-selling international author who specialized in self-growth proclaimed, ‘When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.’

What do you think he meant by this statement? Do you agree? How does this relate to our talk of rewiring our brains and gratitude?”

Allow time for reflection and discussion.

“Think about how this quote connects to the rewiring that occurs in our brain when we change our thinking, feeling, actions/habits, and outlook. Today we are going to do what Dr. Dyer said. That is, we are going to change the way we look at things.

“An easy, but powerful way to change the way we look at things is through practicing gratitude. Today, we are going to create some Gratitude Glasses. When you wear glasses, sunglasses, or 3D glasses it changes what you see, what you view. They change the way you look at things.

“Glasses help us see better and more clearly. Sunglasses get rid of the harmful glare so we can see better and protect our eyes. And 3D glasses expand our view and perspective, helping us to focus on specific things in magnified ways.

“We are going to create ‘Gratitude Glasses’. Just like these other glasses they will help us focus, see better and more clearly, help protect us from harm or a negative view that can hinder us, and help us expand and change our view.

“On the worksheet I gave you are a pair of glasses. Show what your view and outlook is when you practice gratitude. What do you want to see through these positive, grateful lenses? Set the intention for a positive attitude, mindset, and view. Use words and pictures to show this outlook and perspective.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Responsible decision-making.

EXTENSION LESSON 6:

Gratitude Haiku

Educator Prep

If desired, you can write a Gratitude Haiku Poem and write it on the board. Or you may choose another Haiku poem, such as the one below and write it on the board as a sample.

OLD POND

By Basho

The old pond—
a frog jumps in,
sound of water.

Activity

“We’ve been learning a lot about gratitude. Today let’s express ourselves and what gratitude means to us by creating a poem.

“You are going to create a Haiku poem. You may have studied Haiku and written Haiku poems in the past. Haiku is a Japanese form of poetry which is composed of three lines that are non rhyming.

“The first and third lines have five syllables each, while the second line has seven syllables.

“Haiku poems often express feelings and thoughts about nature. But you can write a Haiku poem about any subject that you would like to in this form.

“Many consider the most famous Haiku poem to be Basho's Old Pond which when translated reads: The old pond– a frog jumps in, sound of water.

“Now it’s your turn to create your own Gratitude Haiku Poem. What does gratitude mean to you? What are you grateful for? What feelings does gratitude invoke in you? What does it look like, sound like, feel like?”

Give students time to create their poems and then share them as a whole class, in small groups, or with a partner.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

EXTENSION LESSON 7:

Happiness Boost

Educator Prep

- Put the following quote on the board: You're not happy unless you think you're happy.- Gretchen Rubin
- Bring in a bean bag, squishy ball, or other small, soft item to be tossed from student to student.

Activity

"Look at the quote I've written/shown on the board. What do you think of this quote? What does she mean? Do you agree? Why?"

Allow time for reflection and discussion. For the next activity, you will need a bean bag, squishy ball, or other small, soft item to be thrown around. It's like a hot potato. When a student receives/catches it, they have to quickly name something that makes them happy and then toss it to someone else who will then do the same.

"We are going to play a quick game. I am going to start off with this bean bag/ball. As if it's a hot potato, I have to name one thing that makes me happy and then toss it to one of you. When you receive the bean bag/ball, you do the same. In this way, we will be quickly naming things that make us happy. Let's get started."

Allow a few minutes to play this game, and try to make sure the bean bag/ball gets to each student at least one time.

"Now let's make a list of as many things as you can that make you happy. How long can your list be....25 things, 50 things, more than that?! Let's do a two minute drill....take 2 minutes to brainstorm as many things that make you happy as you can think of."

Allow students two minutes to write as many things as they can. Then in partners or small groups, have students share and compare their lists and reflect on the things that make them happy. Students should look for similarities and connections with their classmates.

"Save your list and add to it. Tuck it away to use on a day you need a boost of happiness!"

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

EXTENSION LESSON 8 :

Attitude of Gratitude

Educator Prep

Preview and cue the following video: [Mindset Wisdom](https://youtu.be/XkziAM_ZyDM). (https://youtu.be/XkziAM_ZyDM)

Activity

“We’ve been talking about how important it is to have the right mindset....one that is positive and inspiring....one that allows us to move past and rise above our challenges, failures, and setbacks.... one that is an attitude of gratitude, able to find the silver lining in the cloud. Let’s look at one famous person’s mindset.

“Watch the following video clip from Will Smith called [Mindset Wisdom](#).”

“So what do you think of Will Smith’s mindset? How did that video clip make you feel? Take a minute to jot down your immediate reactions to the video.”

“In small groups or with a partner, reflect on the video. What can you learn from it? In what ways were you inspired or motivated?

“Describe Will’s mindset and attitude. How has this mindset benefitted him and shaped his life? How can you create a mindset like Will’s? How can you apply this to your life?

“What are a couple of things you could do differently starting today to change your mindset and reframe your perspective?” Students should talk and take notes in their journals.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management; Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 9:

Amazing Me

Educator Prep

- Copy the following quote on the board: "We forget that happiness doesn't come as a result of getting something we don't have, but rather of recognizing and appreciating what we do have." - Fredrick Koeing
- Preview and cue the following video: ['You Are Amazing'](https://youtu.be/kpxXFxSNCF8) (<https://youtu.be/kpxXFxSNCF8>)
- Make copies of the ['Building Me Up' Worksheet](#) for students.

Activity

"Look at the quote on the board. How do you respond to it? What is its message? Do you agree? Why?"

Have students reflect in their journals and/or in class or partner discussion.

"Have you ever put a condition on your life? Like have you ever said, 'I'll be happy when...' or 'I'll be grateful when...'? For example, 'I'll be happy when I finish this class.' Or 'I'll be grateful when I get my new phone.'"

"Waiting for external factors to go your way can limit you. Being grateful and happy are both choices that you can make right now. Why postpone appreciating who you are and what you have going for you? Why postpone being grateful and happy, when you can feel that way right now and it will improve your outlook and your life?"

"Today, let's make the choice to start being grateful for and happy with ourselves and where we are at right now. Let's choose to start loving ourselves by letting go of negativity and realizing the power and control we have over our life right now. Let's start believing that we deserve the best and start expecting it and seeking it."

"Let's watch a video to inspire us!" Show the video: ['You Are Amazing'](#)

"You can brighten up your mind, your outlook, your life anytime you want or need to. But don't wait to feel grateful and happy. I am going to give each of you a sheet called, 'Building Me Up' which includes a meditation for building self-esteem written by

Louise Hay. We are going to stand up and read these words aloud to set a positive intention.”

Encourage students to get in a Courage Pose and read the meditation together as a class.

“Now I’d like you to complete the sentences on the page. Keep this meditation page in a place where you can refer to it when you need to clear your head and refocus your mind and heart in a positive way.”

If time permits, have students share with a partner their responses to the questions.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 10:

My Treasures

Educator Prep

- Display the quote by Thornton Wilder on the board.
- Distribute the [My Treasures worksheet](#).

Activity

“What are some of your treasures? Take a moment to reflect on all the things and people in your life you consider a treasure. On your treasure chest handout, write or draw all of your treasures. What things or people do you most appreciate in your life?”

Allow a few minutes to complete and then have students share as a class, in small groups or with a partner.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

EXTENSION LESSON 11:

Benefits of Gratitude

Educator Prep

- Read and make a copy of the following article, '[The 31 Benefits of Gratitude You Didn't Know About: How Gratitude Can Change Your Life](http://happierhuman.com/benefits-of-gratitude/)':
(<http://happierhuman.com/benefits-of-gratitude/>)
- Project the [Gratitude Benefits chart](#) on a whiteboard or make copies for handouts
Preview and cue the following video: [Gratitude Is Good For You](https://youtu.be/sCV-mEsASLA).
(<https://youtu.be/sCV-mEsASLA>)

Activity

“Let’s start today by taking a Mindful Minute to to center ourselves and focus our attention in a positive way. Remember this is something you can easily do anytime you need to center yourself, calm yourself or change your perspective to one that is more inspiring and positive.

“Find a comfortable position to sit. Close your eyes and for a minute just relax and focus your attention and thoughts on your strength. As you focus on your strength, let your body, mind and heart feel this strength and power.

“Recently, there has been a lot of research on gratitude and the effects of gratitude on the brain and body. The research is amazing and we’re finding that gratitude has a multitude of benefits in all areas of your life. I encourage you to do some research on your own. But today, we are going to discover some more of the benefits of gratitude.

“The more we understand the benefits of something, the more apt we are to practice it to reap these benefits.

“What do you think the benefits might be? Let’s make some predictions.” Allow a few students to share their ideas and predictions.

Show video: [Gratitude Is Good For You](https://youtu.be/sCV-mEsASLA)

At this time, you can show the benefits chart on the whiteboard or if you prefer, hand out copies of it for students. Highlight the different areas.

Break the class into 5 or 6 groups. The article cites 31 benefits. Each group will be given a part of the article with 5 or 6 benefits that they will look at more closely. Assign different sections of the article for each group.

“We are going to delve a little deeper into these benefits. I have an article called, ‘The 31 Benefits of Gratitude You Didn’t Know About: How Gratitude Can Change Your Life’ from the website, happierhuman.com. I am going to break you into small groups and give each group a certain portion of these benefits to review.

“As a group, read more about the benefits your group has been assigned. Write down what you feel is important to know and in your own words what they are talking about. Researchers have found that when you explain something to other people, you understand it better yourself. So, your group will be the teachers. Each group will share with the larger group what they’ve learned.”

Give groups a little time to read and discuss their portion of the article. They will plan what and how they will ‘teach’ their benefits. After, each group will present and ‘teach’ what they learned.

This lesson can be broken into two lessons if desired, one day for groups to do ‘research’ and plan their presentation/lesson, and one day to present to the larger class.

If you don’t have time to do this activity, you can go over some of the information from this article as a whole class. Or you may assign a homework or extension/extra credit assignment where students read the article and give a written summation.

“We’ve been talking and learning about all of the benefits of gratitude. There are so many! Now, let’s make it more personal. What benefits matter most to you and why? Make a list in your journal of the top 5-10 benefits that are most appealing to you and why.”

Time permitting, these can be shared with a partner.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 12:

Have To vs. Get To

Educator Prep

None.

Activity

“Today we are going to continue to change our thinking and focus on gratitude.

“Words are powerful. They can instantly ruin someone’s day or lift them up. One way to change our thinking and change our perspective to something more positive and productive, is by changing our words.

“Let’s look at the words, ‘have’ and ‘get’ as examples.

“Make a list of all of things that you ‘have to’ do everyday.”

Students can write these lists in their journals and then you can generate a sample list on the board.

“How do you feel about having to do those things every day?” Allow for responses which should include: resentful, stressed, annoyed, overwhelmed, anxious, burdened because someone is making me do them; I don’t feel like I have a choice and these things aren’t as fun and seem like a chore.

“Saying you ‘have to’ can imply that you are being forced to do something. It kind of sounds like you don’t have any say or a choice which can make you feel frustrated or annoyed. These things seem negative or not favorable.

“Now make a list of the things you ‘get to’ do every day.” Students can write these in their journals and then you can generate a sample list on the board.

“How do you feel about getting to do these things each day?” For example: happy, grateful, excited, appreciative because these are things you’re looking forward to doing. **“If you ‘get to’ do something, it can imply that it’s something you’re looking forward to**

doing. It seems more like a positive thing that you want to do and perhaps have chosen to do.

“Now select three statements from your ‘have to’ list and change them to ‘get to’. By changing one word in your statement, you can change your thoughts, your feelings, your entire outlook and attitude.

“Some of them might sound silly. For example, if you change ‘I have to take out the garbage today’ to ‘I get to take out the garbage today.’ Very few people would be genuinely happy about that, but when I think about taking the garbage out I think about the delicious meal I ate the night before, the warm house I ate it in, and the waste management folks who work hard every day to keep our city and neighborhood clean. I think about a time when I was sick or injured and couldn’t run errands or do things, and needed help. When I think about those things, I do really feel like I ‘get to’ take out the garbage.....it’s a privilege and I feel more appreciative and grateful.

“Here’s another example, ‘I have to go to school today’ changes to ‘I get to be with my friends, learn something new, and get smarter today’. Which sounds more positive, more favorable? Which would you rather do? Which statement reflects gratitude? Which statement will be more beneficial to you? Which will create a better outlook or attitude? Which will change your thinking in a positive way?”

Allow for reflection and responses. Ask for some students to share how they changed their ‘have to’s’ to ‘get to’s’. Share some examples yourself.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self management

Responsible decision making

EXTENSION LESSON 13:

The Unfolding Identity Project

Educator Prep

Familiarize yourself with the [two worksheets for 'The Unfolding Identity Project.'](#)

You might consider purchasing/ reading aloud: Finding Perfect by Elly Swartz.

Activity

“Today we are going to be doing something called, ‘The Unfolding Identity Project’. Let me tell you a little about this project.

“Elly Swartz wrote a book called, ‘Finding Perfect’. This is the story of 12 year old Molly and some of the struggles she encounters in her life. Molly’s world spins out of control when her mom takes a job away from the family for a year. She wants to get her back and thinks that if she wins the school slam poetry competition it will bring her back. But writing slams and everything becomes harder and her world gets out of control.

“You see complicating Molly’s journey is that she has OCD, or obsessive compulsive disorder. This is an anxiety disorder where you have obsessions, or reoccurring, unwanted thoughts, ideas, and feelings, that make you act compulsively. This may mean that you carry out repetitive behaviors to try to deal with these obsessions, to try to organize and straighten out your world.

“Molly hides herself from her family and friends and she sees herself as one thing- OCD- not a wonderful student or friend or any of the other great qualities she has. She sees herself very differently from how the world sees her. She is scared, but she is also brave, strong, and special.....just like all of you are.

“In the Unfolding Identity Project, we learn we are all a little like Molly. Each one of us is a wonderful blend of many layers. It is this composite of traits that makes us special and wonderful. When we really explore ourselves, we find much to be grateful for and develop a stronger sense of self. We learn to love ourselves more.

“When we know and love ourselves more, we can better connect and relate to others. If we can see that each one of us is a blend, then maybe, we can see that the quarterback on the school team and girl who plays cello, the kids we think we have absolutely nothing in common with, are a blend, too. We can begin to see they are not just football or music. In the end, we can see that no one is just one thing.

“And, maybe in those layers we can realize that we are more alike than we are different. We can relate and empathize. We can forgive and understand. We can have courage and connect. We can be grateful for ourselves and others, and grateful for our similarities and differences.”

Hand out the two worksheets for ‘The Unfolding Identity Project’ and walk the students through this activity. Allow a few minutes at the end for discussion and reflection.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 14:

Vision Board

Educator Prep

For this activity, provide students with small poster boards and have magazines, colored paper, and other art materials for use. Students can begin to create it at school and finish it at home as an assignment or extra credit opportunity.

The following are great articles on vision boards to give you more information and help direct this activity.

- [The Scientific Reason Why](#)
- [How To Make A Vision Board](#)
- [How To Create An Empowering Vision Book](#)

Activity

“Gretchen Rubin (2015), author of The Happiness Project, observes that, for most people, ‘outer order contributes to inner calm’.

“By organizing the world around you, it will help calm the world within you. Next time you are feeling down and out- clean your room! Yes, clean your room. Well, that’s one way to quickly create order and calm in your life. But let’s create a plan to create outer order in our lives...what will you change, what will you clean up, how you will create order?”

“Has anyone ever heard of a vision board? This is when you create a special place that displays a visual representation of what you want and what you want to feel. We talked about the law of attraction....what you focus on expands. Vision boards encourage us to practice visualization, a very powerful mind exercise. Visualizing is envisioning what you want to have happen.

“Lots of people, including athletes and celebrities, use visualization to help set their mind and focus on what they want to achieve or accomplish.”

“Let’s create a vision board. There are no rules to creating it. You want to put things on there to motivate and inspire you....things that help focus your mind, thoughts and energy on what you want to achieve, and also what you want to feel. Include words and drawings. Include things from your past that remind you of special moments and occasions. Write

affirmations, mantras, quotes, and inspiring words. Tell a story and express your visions and goals in different areas of your life.

“Vision boards represent you and your life story, like a map for your life. Remember what you focus on expands, think about the intention you want to set and the feelings you want to create with this board. Make it bold and colorful....make it you and make it come to life!”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 15:

Growth Mindset

Educator Prep

Preview and Cue the following video clip: [‘Karate Kid 2’](https://youtu.be/o_p6h9AeBik): (https://youtu.be/o_p6h9AeBik)

Activity

“So we know life isn’t always easy. We know that we will make mistakes and fail along the way. We will face obstacles that will make it easy to get down and even give up. But if we see problems as opportunities, see the possible in the impossible, and have a grateful, positive attitude we will have the courage and heart to persevere and succeed.

“If we put on some gratitude glasses or shades, it allows us to see the positive in the negative, the sun peeking through the clouds, the extraordinary in the ordinary. Lessons, benefits, and amazing things are everywhere if we are mindful, having the right focus and looking in the right way.

“Let’s watch a video clip from the Karate Kid 2 movie.”

Show the following video clip: [Karate Kid 2](#).

“What do you think? What was the message in this movie clip? What is the boy’s attitude like? What did the boy learn? How does this relate to having gratitude? How does this relate to our talk of mindset and attitude?”

Allow for reflection and discussion as a class.

“Let’s start creating a growth mindset. This means we believe we can achieve, learn, and be successful, developing our skills and talents through dedication and hard work. We believe that we are never stuck where we are. We are able to be resilient, that is, be strong, withstand, and bounce back in the face of adversity. Even more, we believe in our ability to persevere and not just bounce back but move past our challenges. With a growth mindset, we have a love of learning and always look for the lessons that will move us forward and help us become our best self.

We can begin creating this growth mindset by completing these sentences to review what we've learned."

Write the following sentences on the board:

- *Challenges, mistakes and failures are _____.*
- *I am thankful for these because _____.*
- *Challenges, mistakes and failures can help me grow only when _____.*
- *When faced with problems, mistakes, and failures, I can tell myself _____.*

Have students complete these sentences in their journals and then discuss as a class.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Responsible decision-making



Grade 6 | [FORGIVENESS](#) | Overview

GRADE 6, UNIT 3:

FORGIVENESS

OVERVIEW

Forgiveness means choosing to let go of anger and resentment toward yourself or someone else, to surrender thoughts of revenge, and to move forward with your personal power intact. When someone forgives, they activate a neural network that connects different regions

of the brain (Thompson & Waltz, 2008). Forgiveness is literally and figuratively a coming together, both biologically and behaviorally. The brain's network of forgiveness includes the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, precuneus, and inferior parietal lobule. Activating this neural "forgiveness network" results in a sense of personal relief.

Students learn how to forgive themselves and others if they've made a mistake, caused an accident, or hurt someone as a result of their actions. Students learn healthy ways to express anger and to calm themselves down. They also learn how their brains and bodies respond to anger. They practice listening skills to support each other when they feel angry or are having strong emotions.

Forgiveness has been shown to improve relationships, decrease anxiety and stress, lower blood pressure, lower the risk of depression, and strengthen immune and heart health. Letting go of negative emotions can often have a remarkable impact on the body (Thompson & Waltz, 2008).

FORGIVENESS AND THE BRAIN

To forgive is to activate a neural network connecting different regions of the brain. Forgiveness is literally and figuratively a coming together, both biologically and behaviorally. The network of forgiveness in the brain includes the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, the precuneus, and the inferior parietal lobule (Farrow, et al., 2001).

The activation of this “forgiveness network” results in a personal sense of relief (Newberg, d’Aquila, Newberg, & deMarici, 2001). Scarlett calls it “cutting the umbilical cord of anger and resentment.”

The exercises on forgive-ness in this Unit seek to increase endorphin levels (GABA, DHEA, serotonin, and melatonin) while reducing cortisol. Forgiveness is another method of attaining what is sometimes called the “runner’s high.”

We hug a lot more of the human brain when we choose forgiveness than when we choose spite. Scientists have shown that forgiveness connects more diverse parts of the brain than spite. If it takes more brain power to forgive and less brainpower to remain angry, which do you think is a smarter method of handling a situation in which you feel hurt or offended? The smart choice (literally and figuratively) is forgiveness. When you choose forgiveness, you are choosing the human and calming your numbat.

Concentrated breathing and body relaxation techniques help calm the body and mind. Learned breathing regulates the nervous system and helps us relax (Lazar et al., 2000). Diaphragmatic breathing is a wonderful technique that helps cultivate focus. This type of breathing is especially good for children who experience acute fear or anxiety; it can help calm their nervous systems (Lazar et al., 2000). Diaphragmatic breathing allows our lungs to flex and our diaphragms to open and expand. This type of breathing expands our stomachs rather than our chests. Children can learn to do these deep breaths, and utilize them when faced with stressful situations. Research suggests that practicing controlled breathing can help us to reduce stress and develop positive mind-sets for learning success (Fried, 1993; Hazlett-Stevens & Craske, 2009).

LESSONS

Lesson 1: What is Forgiveness?

Lesson 2: Mindful About Forgiveness

Lesson 3: Dealing with Anger

Lesson 4: Forgiving Others

Lesson 5: Forgiving Ourselves

Lesson 6: Celebrating Forgiveness

EXTENSION LESSONS

Ext. Lesson 1: Musical Hot Feelings Hacky Sac

Ext. Lesson 2: Two Minute Forgiveness Dump

Ext. Lesson 3: Revisiting Mindful Minutes

Ext. Lesson 4: Ways To Chill Out

Ext. Lesson 5: Two Parts to the Heart

Ext. Lesson 6: Proactive vs. Reactive

Ext. Lesson 7: Trash It

Ext. Lesson 8: Pep Talk

Ext. Lesson 9: Inner Protector

Ext. Lesson 10: FOR-GIVE-NESS Poetry

Ext. Lesson 11: Group Gratitude Pose



Lesson 1: What is Forgiveness?

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Define forgiveness➤ Analyze the representation of the weight of anger➤ Act out 'Forgiveness Skits'➤ Compare and contrast forgiving and not forgiving➤ Synthesize words that relate to forgiveness	<p><u>CSED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Moral Character➤ Performance Character➤ Intellectual Character <p><u>SEL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Self Awareness➤ Self Management➤ Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

Prior to acting out forgiveness skits, you may choose to create scenarios to “act out.”

Lesson

“Forgiveness is the next ingredient in the Choose Love Formula. It’s a very important part of Choosing Love. Everyone makes mistakes, but what really makes us human is our ability to forgive.”

“Find a comfortable position to sit or stand. Close your eyes and focus your attention on the bottoms of your feet for one minute. Imagine any stress or discomfort you might feel moving through you and being absorbed by the ground.”

“Let’s break things down and talk about what forgiveness really is. Take out your journal. On the top of the first page write ‘WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?’. Take a few minutes to write down what forgiveness means to you.”

“Turn to your neighbor or partner and share what you wrote. Discuss the similarities and differences in your definitions.” Allow a few minutes for sharing and reflection.

“What did you come up with? Share with the class some ideas we already have about forgiveness.” Students share examples.

“The definition of forgiveness that we will use is this... Forgiveness means choosing to let go of anger and resentment toward yourself or someone else, to surrender thoughts of revenge, and to move forward with your personal power intact.”

“What do you think I mean by personal power?” Students share examples.

“Forgiveness is not about how the other person is feeling. It is about cutting yourself free. Forgiveness is a gift that you give yourself by letting go of feeling angry, resentful or revengeful. When you do this, you are not wasting your time and energy on this negativity...you are holding onto your personal power.”

“It takes courage to forgive someone. Sometimes we may think that by forgiving someone we are saying that what they did was ok. We may feel that if we forgive someone then that means that they are no longer responsible for what they did. We may feel that forgiving means forgetting. Forgiving isn’t condoning what someone did and it doesn’t let them off the hook for what they did. They are still responsible and accountable for what occurred. We certainly can’t expect to totally wipe the slate clean and forget what happened. That takes time, and even then, we may never forget it. Forgiving allows us to not stay stuck in the situation.”

“When someone hurts us in some way, it’s like we are attached to them with an umbilical cord. An umbilical cord is the cord that connects a growing baby to the mother’s supply of nutrients. When we are attached to someone because of something negative they did to us, it’s as if they are sucking the life out of us...the negative feelings we have towards them is draining and leaves little room for positivity and good feelings. When we hold grudges and have anger and resentment towards someone, it takes away our power and control. Forgiving means cutting that cord and getting our power, control, positivity, and energy back.”

“Today, I’m going to ask for a few volunteers to ‘Act Out’ a time when they forgave someone in ‘Forgiveness Skits’. I’m going to break you into groups. Not all of you will be able to be an actor in the skit. Use as many people as you can to be a part of the skit. And those of you who will not be acting, can help with the script and be a ‘director’. Work together to create and present these ‘Forgiveness Skits’.”

Allow students a few minutes to prepare their skit. Then have groups take turns presenting. After, allow time for students to reflect about this experience in their journals. This can be broken into two lessons if desired.

“Let’s take a little time to reflect on this experience in our journals. How did it make you feel? Did you see similarities in the skits? Any differences? What type of body language was used? Write down your reflections.”

Call to Action

Make a list of words that you could use to forgive someone. Write down words that will help you let go. Using the website <https://worditout.com/word-cloud/create>, or creating your own using paper, make your own ‘Word Splash’ of forgiveness words.



Lesson 2: Mindful About Forgiveness

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Create a forgiveness pose.
- Practice forgiveness through writing and experience its benefits.
- Connect a relay game to carrying the weight of anger, hurt and resentment.
- Engage in a visualization and drawing activity to practice letting go of anger.
- Cite the benefits of mindfulness and meditation.

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

- Preview and cue the following video
[‘The Power of Forgiveness-The Science of Happiness’](https://youtu.be/8o9_TIZyB_Y):
(https://youtu.be/8o9_TIZyB_Y)
- Preview school psychologist [Amy Cuddy’s TED talk](#) about how your body language shapes who you are and helps you manage feelings and thoughts in a powerful and positive way. You may choose to show some or all of the video to your students as part of this lesson or an extension of this lesson. (https://youtu.be/Ks-_Mh1QhMc)

- Create your own Forgiveness Pose. A Forgiveness Pose is similar to a Courage Pose in that you are shaping your body to express forgiveness and align your body with your emotions in a positive, peaceful way.
- Additionally, you may choose to read the Harvard research article on [the benefits of power posing before high stakes social evaluations](https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/9547823/13-027.pdf?sequence=1).
(<https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/9547823/13-027.pdf?sequence=1>)
- Prepare 2 stacks of books, 8 books in each stack, for relay activity.

Lesson

“One way to become more mindful and open to forgiveness is to practice Forgiveness Poses. A Forgiveness Pose is similar to a Courage Pose. It’s a way of sitting or standing that increases your feelings of personal peace and openness. Posing in this way changes your body chemistry. This change helps your brain and body move from anger and resentment toward forgiveness.”

“Everyone take a minute to find a sitting or standing pose that helps you to feel open, relaxed, peaceful, receptive, and forgiving. Typically, you might spread your arms out wide, open your hands instead of having them closed or in a fist. You may place a hand over your heart. You may make a peace sign gesture. Your body should be comfortable and relaxed, not rigid and tense. Try out a few poses before deciding which one feels best to you. Make sure you can hold your pose for at least one minute without getting hurt or tired.”

Give students a few minutes to find a pose.

“Let’s practice holding your Forgiveness Pose together. First we’ll try holding for 15 seconds. Ready, go!” Practice again for 30 seconds, and then one minute. Tell students that the pose works best when held for two minutes.

“Remember we said that when someone understands the benefit of doing something, they are more apt to do it. We’ve been talking about the importance of forgiveness and how it can help us. But today, we are going to look a little closer at the benefits of forgiveness. How have you personally benefited from practicing forgiveness or how have you seen other people experience benefits from forgiveness?”

Allow students to share. Prompt students to consider the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social benefits. Start a list on the board of the benefits you hear students sharing. This list will be added to during the class. Students can also start a list of benefits in their journals.

“Today you are going to break into groups. Each group will have an article to review that will discuss forgiveness and its benefits. Your group will read the article and highlight important information that you will then present to the class. In this way, we will be researching forgiveness and learning more about its practice and how it benefits us in a multitude of ways. Be creative in your presentations.”

Break students into groups. Give each group a couple of copies of the articles. Allow enough time for groups to read, discuss and plan what they will share and how they will share their info with the larger group. This lesson can be broken into two lessons if necessary and schedule permits.

After each group presents, add benefits noted to the list generated at the start of the lesson.

Make sure that students get at the following benefits noted by healthcare providers: healthier and stronger relationships, greater emotional/psychological well-being, improved heart health, lower blood pressure, less anxiety, less stress, less hostility, stronger immune system, fewer symptoms of depression (Mayo Clinic, 2014).

“Let’s add to the list we started of the benefits of forgiveness. Let’s update our list and write it in our journals. It’s a long list, isn’t it? Practicing forgiveness is very beneficial to our physical, emotional, and social well-being and can have a very positive effect on us in so many ways. As we finish this lesson, take a minute to star the benefits that are most important to you. Being mindful of these will motivate you to practice forgiveness.”

“Keeping score of old scores and scars, getting even and one-upping, always makes you less than you are.” -- Malcolm Forbes

“What do you think that means? What does ‘keeping score’ mean? What do you think is meant by old ‘scores and scars’? The author refers to ‘getting even and one-upping’, what are examples of that? And how are you ‘less than you are’? What does that part mean?”

“Write this quote in your journals and then reflect on and respond to these questions.”

Allow time for reflection and then discuss as a class using these questions to prompt discussion.

“We’ve been talking about forgiveness and the power of forgiveness. We said that when you forgive you can move forward with your personal power intact. You cut the cord to the negative feelings you are harboring, that is the old scores and scars, getting even and

one upping, like the poem mentions. This frees you up to have your power and control back....it allows you to get away from the negativity, the hate and darkness, and move to love and light. Forgiveness moves you forward and gets you back to being the best version of you, rather than being 'less than you are' as the poem mentioned."

"Let's watch a video called, 'The Power of Forgiveness'. They are going to do a study with individuals involving a specific activity surrounding forgiveness. Let's check it out and then we'll discuss."

Show students the following video clip: https://youtu.be/8o9_TlZyB_Y

"What do you think? Let's share some of our thoughts and feelings about the video we just saw. What kind of feelings did it bring up for you? The individuals had to write down someone who had wronged or hurt them, write about what happened, and then in their own words forgive them for what they did and the hurt and pain it caused. How was this exercise helpful and impactful to the individuals?" Allow time for students to reflect in their journals and then discuss as a class.

"In this video, peoples' happiness increased through this writing exercise in forgiveness. Close your eyes and think of someone who has wronged you in some way, someone you hold a grudge against or have some unresolved conflict with and feelings towards. Open your eyes and in your journals write down this person. Write about what caused the conflict and tension between you and this person. Write how you feel about the person, the conflict, and the situation. Then finally and most importantly, in your own words and way, try to forgive this person."

Allow time for students to do this writing exercise and then debrief asking them how they felt before and after doing this. How did this exercise positively impact them? How did forgiving the other person benefit them?

"You just learned one easy way to start practicing forgiveness- writing about a situation and how it makes you feel and then forgiving the person in your own words and way. The best way to forgive someone is to do so face to face. That can be more difficult to do, at least initially. A good way to work up to that is to practice forgiving through expressive writing like you just did or by writing them a letter."

"In this letter, you express your feelings to someone who has wronged you in some way. You let them know what they did that hurt you and how you felt about it. Then, you can let them know that you forgive them and express that in your own words. You may someday give the letter to them, or you may never give it to them. You expressed your

forgiveness towards them and this act alone will get your personal power and control back and make you happier and healthier!”

“I had you focus on feeling the weight because today we are going to be talking about the weight of anger and hurt. We are going to begin by playing a relay game.”

Place two stacks of books at one side of the room, eight books in each stack. Ask for 16 student volunteers, eight on each team. For the relay, the first person walks (jumps, hops, or whatever you decide) to the stack of books, picks one up, and then returns to their team. They hand the book to the second person who repeats the process but this time holding the book from the first person. Repeat this until, finally, the last person is carrying all of the books which, of course, will make it more difficult.

Ask the student participants and the class questions such as the following: How did it feel to do this activity with the weight of the books? Was it challenging? How did it affect your ability to accomplish the task? How did it affect the way you think and feel?

“Anger and hurt can feel like a weight sometimes....it’s an extra weight that you carry that weighs heavy on your mind, your heart, your body, your whole being. Carrying around anger, hurt and resentment is exhausting and difficult. It is not fun. And it can hold us back and prevent us from living our most happy, healthy, and successful lives. It can actually be stressful for our bodies when we choose to carry that weight around with us. Forgiveness is a process of putting down that weight.”

“Forgiving helps us increase our happiness, reduce our stress, and it contributes to better overall well-being. Let’s do a brief activity to practice letting go of the weight.”

“Imagine yourself standing carrying a bunch of boxes. Each one of those boxes represents the anger, hurt, and resentment that you are holding onto.”

“Imagine yourself trying to walk around and doing your normal daily things carrying all of these boxes. What would you be thinking? How would you be feeling?” Allow for responses.

“Would you be able to concentrate on anything you want to concentrate on? Would you be able to enjoy your life? Would this be easy? Probably not.”

“Close your eyes for a moment. Picture all of these boxes that you are carrying that represent the hurts, wrongs, anger, and grudges that you are carrying around with you. Now imagine yourself putting those boxes down one-by-one. As you put each box down in your mind, say what you are forgiving by letting go of that box. Draw a picture of this

in your notebook which helps you to visualize it. In each box that you draw, write down one hurt or angry feeling or grudge about something that you carry around.”

“Any time you feel that extra weight, tell yourself, ‘put down the weight’. Visualize yourself letting go of these weights, these boxes, just as we did today. Though this is a simple exercise, this is the start to forgiveness. You will feel so much better and your life will be so much happier once you forgive. Instead of dwelling on the negative, you will make a shift to positive thoughts and feelings. You will get your power and control back. You will be able to fully enjoy the things you love!”

Call to Action

Find 3-4 books or heavy objects that can be stacked on each other. On each object write down one thing on a post it note that weighs you down or consumes your thoughts at times. Stack each object with the post it note. After holding the stack take one object off at a time and repeat “I am letting go of this anger and stress. I am lighter now.” Do this for each object until your hands are free again. Examine how you feel.



Lesson 3: Dealing With Anger

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Recognize physical sensations associated with anger.
- Visualize letting go of anger.
- Engage in a Forgiveness Breath.
- Differentiate between different intensities of anger.
- Engage in a stress relieving game/activity.
- Highlight ways to calm down and effectively deal with angry feelings.

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

- Write the heading, 'Anger Cues' on the board.
- Have a bunch of books that you will use to stack in a student's arms or put in a bag for them to hold.
- Have a balloon (1 per class), uninflated, ready for the lesson.

Lesson

“Earlier this year we learned about diaphragmatic breathing. Today, we practice a new breath, the Forgiveness Breath. Taking breaths like this is a good way to let go of some of the anger we feel. It helps to release the negative feelings and calm us down. It can help us drop the weight and the burden of challenging feelings.”

“Close your eyes. Think quietly to yourself, ‘May I let go of difficult feelings that weigh me down. May I practice forgiveness today.’”

“Place one hand on your heart and one hand on your belly. Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose...and slowly breathe out through your mouth. Notice how when you breathe in deeply, all of the air goes to your belly and it gets bigger.”

“Continue to breathe in this way. In through your nose, slowly breathe out through your mouth. Relax your body and imagine a warm, gentle ocean wave. Every time you breathe in, the wave slowly comes towards you bringing you comfort and calm. Every time you breathe out, the wave slowly rolls away taking your anger, your worries, your hurt, your troubles away.”

“Now that we’ve practiced our Forgiveness breaths, let’s set an intention for today. An intention is a purpose or a reason for doing something. When we set an intention it helps us focus on something and think about how or why we are doing something. The intention for today is: ‘May my mind be open, focused, and clear so I can learn about the power of forgiveness.’ Say that quietly to yourself. I will repeat it one more time: ‘May my mind be open, focused, and clear so I can learn about the power of forgiveness.’”

“We are going to be talking about anger and feeling angry. When someone has hurt us, we often feel angry. When we forgive, we are able to move past and even let go of our anger and other challenging emotions so that we can feel better and feel happy.”

“All feelings are natural and a normal part of living and being a human being. Our feelings help us make decisions about how we act, the choices we make, and the way we treat others.”

“Life isn’t always great. Things don’t always go the way we’d like or the way we plan. We can’t control how others treat us and sometimes others will be mean to us or cause us

hurt and pain. We will feel anger, frustration, resentment and sadness from the way people treat us and the ways they have hurt or wronged us.”

“While feeling anger is a natural response, feeling too much of it can be unhealthy. Anger can be an uncomfortable emotion, and sometimes it can grow really big. It can become a very powerful feeling that overshadows other feelings if we don’t learn how to deal with it. Anger is important because it sometimes helps us know when something isn’t right or isn’t fair. It can also challenge us and move us to action. Thankfully we get to choose. We can choose to manage our angry feelings. We can choose to let go and forgive.”

“What cues does your body give you to let you know when you are angry? How can you tell when someone is angry just by looking at them?”

Allow for students to come up with a list of body signs/cues. Write these on the board under the heading, ‘Anger Cues’.

“We talked about how if we don’t deal with our angry and challenging feelings, we can have trouble making good choices because the three parts of our brain aren’t working together. Our Lizard Brain is causing us to feel uncomfortable. We react impulsively without thinking using fight/flight/or freeze responses and having no regulation. Our numbat brain is providing us with a roller coaster of emotions that are left unchecked, out of sorts, and powerful. Our human brain is not engaged at all....so no focus, clear thinking, or thoughtful decision-making. “

“Watch what happens when I keep my anger and other feelings bottled up. This balloon is you. Every time something happens that angers or upsets you and you don’t deal with the feelings, more air gets added to the balloon. Tell me some things that happen that might make you mad...what are some ways others have hurt or wronged you...what are some grudges you have?”

Each time someone tells you something, add air to the balloon. Keep adding until it is very large. If it pops, that proves your point of how you must deal with the feelings and situations and get control so you don’t ‘pop’.

“How would someone feel if they had this much to carry around with them? Would they be able to focus, learn, have fun, and be their best self? Eventually what happens to a balloon with too much air in it? It pops....which for us just means we explode, we hurt ourselves, we hurt others, we make poor choices, and/or we do something we regret.”

“Today we are going to have a snowball fight! First, we need some snowballs. We are going to take a piece of paper. I’d like you to write one positive way that you can deal with or let go of your anger and other feelings...some way to express your feelings...some way to calm you down. This way needs to be something that won’t hurt you or anyone else. After you write your idea down, crumple up the paper, so it’s a round snowball.”

Split the class in half so that one group is on one side of the room and the other group is on the other side of the room.

“I will start the snowball fight. When I throw the first snowball, you can begin throwing back and forth. The fight will end when I turn off the lights. At that time you will pick up one snowball paper off the floor and return to your seat. Relax and have fun. This is some physical activity and exercise which is another great way to deal with your feelings and relax ”

You will start the snowball fight. Let students throw their snowball papers back and forth for a few minutes. When you end the snowball fight, have each person pick up one snowball and return to their seat.

“You may open up your snowball and read the idea that’s on it to everyone. We are going to write these ideas down and call it, ‘Ways to Chill Out’. Remember these are ways to express or let go of anger and other negative feelings that are healthy and positive....they won’t hurt us or others.”

“You get to choose how to respond to any situation. When we talk about forgiveness, it means that you have the choice to feel angry, resentful or hurt....and you also have the choice to deal with these feelings and let them go.”

“When you choose to forgive, you activate a neural network connecting different regions of the brain that can result in a personal sense of relief (Newberg, d’Aquili, Newberg, & deMarici, 2001). When you let go of anger, resentment, spite, or the possibility of revenge, it helps you leave the lizard, or your fight/flight/freeze mode. As we know, this can help lower your blood pressure and slow down your heart rate, and helps you think more clearly.”

“It feels good to be in control of how we respond and to be in control of our feelings. Forgiving gives us our personal power back. Having healthy ways to deal with our feelings gives us power also.”

Call to Action

Pick one or two ideas from the “Ways to Chill Out” list and consciously work to practice them for the week. Make a note to yourself of what idea you used, how successful it was and how you felt before and after. Knowing how our bodies respond and telling ourselves what works and what doesn’t, helps us make the choice to use the idea when we need it again. Good luck!



Lesson 4: Forgiving Others

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Students will analyze a quote about the power of forgiveness.
- Connect forgiveness with the concept of 'cutting the cord.'
- Connect to someone by anger and resentment.
- Distinguish between reactive and proactive responses.
- Practice proactively responding to various scenarios.

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

- For each pair of students, have something to tie them together by the ankles or hands, like a sash, scarf, piece of string or yarn, rubber band....or you could have them hold onto an object together.
- Have an additional piece of strong/yarn/cord for each pair that will be held between two students. You will need a piece for each student.
- Have scissors available for students. You will need a pair for each pair of students.

Lesson

“We are going to explore what it means to forgive others. Let’s take a Forgiveness Breath. Close your eyes and put one hand on your heart and the other hand on your belly. Breathe in slowly through your nose as if you are smelling flowers. Breathe in, let the air fill your belly like a balloon filling with air. Then release the breath, letting all of the air out of your belly by breathing out of your mouth as if you are blowing on hot cocoa.”

“Continue to breathe in this way. In through your nose, fill up your belly, and slowly breathe out through your mouth. As we keep breathing in this way, relax your body and imagine a warm, gentle ocean wave. Every time you breathe in, the wave slowly comes towards you bringing you comfort and calm. Every time you breathe out, the wave slowly rolls away taking your anger, your worries, your hurt, your troubles away.” Lead three more breaths. You may debrief after by asking students how they feel after practicing the forgiveness breath.

“When someone has hurt us, betrayed us, or wronged us in some way of course we feel sad, angry, frustrated, and resentful. These emotions are big and powerful, sometimes overwhelming. When we can’t forgive others, we are attached to them and it’s as if we have this imaginary cord that connects us emotionally to them. We stay stuck in these difficult feelings. Feeling any challenging emotion for extended amounts of time can be very unhealthy. For instance, anger stimulates the ‘fight or flight’ response in our brain. Our body’s natural response is to release cortisol and adrenaline, which raises our blood pressure. Prolonged anger can lead to heart disease, insomnia, headaches, depression, and poor judgement.”

“Let’s talk about this cord again. Someone hurts you and now you have these angry feelings towards them that connect you to them as if by a cord. Have you ever tried to run a three legged race? That’s when you and another person tie their legs together and try to run. It’s very difficult and frustrating. When you’re attached to someone else, it’s more difficult to do anything, even simple day to day things.”

“Envision yourself and a person you’ve had a negative experience with attached by this cord. When you feel angry and fix your thoughts on the other person, it strengthens the attachment. It’s as if a cord or rope connecting you is tightened. This inhibits you from feeling good, from doing what you want, and from making the best choices. The more you focus on the anger, the hurt, the betrayal, the resentment, the stronger that cord becomes. This minimizes your personal power and agency, or ability to act independently and make your own choices and decisions.”

CUT THE CORD **This activity will need to be modified for social distancing. It can also be eliminated and you may continue with the lesson at the **

We want students to feel 'tied' or connected to another person. Have students tie their ankles together with a sash/scarf/string/rubber band like they are running a three legged race. Ask students to hold onto something like a scarf, string/yarn, rubber band or other object that symbolizes being tied together. Give students a simple task to do together that will be more challenging if they are 'tied' together.

"Let's see what it feels like to be 'tied' to someone else in this way." Tie the students together in some way, at the ankles or hands....with a sash, scarf, string, yarn, rubber band, etc. Have them walk around and do a few things to see what it's like being connected in this way with another person. Allow enough time for students to really get a feel for how uncomfortable, annoying, and difficult this is and how it impacts everything they do.

"How did it feel to be 'tied' to someone in this way? Was it challenging? How would being connected in this way impact everything you do? How would it negatively affect your life?" Allow for discussion.

"I'd like you to draw a circle in your journals. Make it big enough so that you can write some things down in it. Draw a small sun in here. Write down all of the things we can control or change in this circle." Make a circle on the board and write down their ideas. This should include: my words, my actions, my thoughts, my feelings, my behaviors, my ideas, my choices, my effort, etc.

"Make a circle outside of that inner circle. Draw a small storm cloud in it. Let's brainstorm all of the things we can't control or can't change and write them in this circle." Draw this outer circle and write down students' ideas. This should include: Other peoples' feelings, thoughts, ideas, choices, actions, mistakes, behaviors, etc.

"Remember we can't always choose what happens to us, but we can always choose how we respond. When we are proactive, it means focus on the things that you can control or change and try to make things better. A proactive person is using their human brain by dealing with their feelings, calming down so they can think clearly, and thoughtfully choosing their actions and responses. A proactive person says, 'I can control my feelings and reactions.', 'Let's look at the choices or alternatives.', 'Let me think about the consequences of my choices.', 'I can...', 'I will...', 'I choose...', 'I will make a responsible

choice.', "What's the best solution to this?', 'I won't let what you did negatively affect me.', 'I will think before I respond.'

'I won't react in the same negative way that you behaved.'"

"The reactive person is the complete opposite. That person thinks that everything is out of their control. They respond without thinking, letting their reactive and impulsive lizard brain drive their choices and behaviors which means a lot of 'flight or fight' responses. A reactive person says, 'I have to do that.', 'I must...', 'I can't...', 'There's nothing I can do.', 'They make me so mad.', 'I can't control my feelings and actions.', 'I can't let it go.', 'I need to give it right back to them.', 'They hurt me so I'm going to hurt them right back.'"

"Who do you think is going to handle situations and problems better? Who do you think is going to be healthier and happier? Who is going to be better able to get along with others and resolve conflicts? Who would make the choice to forgive to get their personal power back, the proactive or reactive person?"

"What would a proactive person do? How would he/she respond?" Allow for varied responses such as, let her know that that's not acceptable or that it hurt you, ask her to stop, walk away, go let your parents know so they can handle it, etc.

"I'm going to share some scenarios. I'd like you to walk to the side of the room labeled 'proactive' if you can think of a response that is proactive, or 'reactive' if you can think of a response that would fall under that category. After each scenario we will ask one from each side of the room to share their idea."

Situation:

- Someone started a rumor about you.
- Someone posted something nasty about you on social media.
- A group won't let you sit with them at lunch.
- Your mom didn't pay attention when you were sharing something that was important to you.
- An older student makes fun of you in the halls.
- Your best friend is talking behind your back.
- Your friend invited everyone but you to the party.

You can ask for students to give suggestions for other scenarios.

You can have students share what the reactive responses might be as well to highlight the difference in response. Time permitting, you could have students role play these scenarios showing the reactive and proactive responses.

Call to Action

On a scrap of paper, jot down at least one thing that someone has done to you that is causing you pain, sadness, and anger. Can you choose to forgive and erase or get rid of the hurt you are carrying around? If you are ready to forgive, crumble the paper and throw it away.....say to yourself or out loud if you feel like it,

'I forgive and have the power to let go.'



Lesson 5: Forgiving Ourselves

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Cite the importance of self-forgiveness.
- Students will view and discuss a video about the 'The Critical Inner Voice'.
- Reframe negative self-talk into positive self-talk.
- Identify the positive impact self-forgiveness has on the mind and body.
- Practice self-forgiveness.
- Develop a personal inner protector
- Define amends.
- Engage in authentic apologies.
- Create a Top Ten list of other ways to make amends besides apologizing.

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

- Preview and cue the following video clip, ['The Critical Inner Voice'](https://youtu.be/uWc4pZhnpOw). You will be showing this video until it is 1:20 in. (<https://youtu.be/uWc4pZhnpOw>)
- Each child should receive 2 copies of the Body Outline Picture. They will be coloring them two times to differentiate how they feel.

- Have crayons, markers, or colored pencils on hand for students to use to color in the Body Outline pictures.

Lesson

“ Find a comfortable position to sit. Close your eyes, take a deep belly breath and focus your attention on your thoughts for one minute. Listen to your thoughts as if you were listening to music. Observe them from a distance.”

“We are going to be talking about a different kind of forgiveness. That is self-forgiveness. While different, this is a very important form of forgiveness. If we don’t forgive ourselves for the mistakes we’ve made, the hurts we’ve caused and the wrongs we’ve done, how can we expect to forgive anyone else? Truth is, often it’s harder to forgive yourself.”

“Nobody is perfect and everyone makes mistakes. It’s important to have the courage to acknowledge our mistakes. We can even be grateful for them. You can feel grateful for your mistakes as they are actually opportunities for you to grow and learn more about yourself, others, and the world around you.”

“Often we don’t see mistakes in this way though. When we make mistakes often we feel frustrated or angry at ourselves. Sometimes we feel so frustrated and angry at ourselves for a mistake, that we get stuck in a cycle of negative self-talk. We don’t just beat ourselves up over the mistake, but we just start thinking that everything we do is bad. That negative voice speaks more often, gets louder, and gets meaner.....and it keeps on talking. This negative self- talk clouds our minds and thoughts and weighs heavy on our hearts, making us feel worse. It can also negatively effect everything we do and the relationships we have with others.”

“Let’s watch a really short video clip about this negative self talk called, ‘The Critical Inner Voice’:

Play the following video for the first 1:20: <https://youtu.be/uWc4pZhnpOw>

“Raise your hand if you’ve met or heard that Critical Inner Voice, that inner critic, that nasty coach. Who can give an example of a when they’ve experienced their inner critic? How has listening to your inner critic inhibited you or hurt you?” Allow for a few responses.

“The inner critic makes choices out of fear instead of love. One way to start a conversation with your inner critic is to ask questions about what it’s saying to get to the truth. You can say, ‘Will this really happen?’, ‘Is this really how they feel?’, ‘Is this an exaggeration?’, ‘How do I know this is true?’, ‘What if that’s not true?’ ”

“Then, you can use positive affirmations to shift negative thoughts to positive ones. We’ve talked about how important it is to choose positive thoughts and how, in doing so, we can rewire our brain for positivity. So let’s practice this valuable skill again. This will help us to forgive ourselves.”

“Let’s practice reframing a few negative statements. For example, ‘Don’t ask for help or you’ll look stupid.’ Turning this to positive self-talk we could say, ‘It’s Ok to ask for help. Everyone needs help sometimes. Asking for help shows courage. The sooner I ask for help, the sooner I can learn this and be successful.’”

“Give me some help on these:

- Call out the following and have students volunteer a way to reframe the negative talk. You can add more statements. And you may need to model some reframed responses at first.
- ‘Don’t wear that or they’ll make fun of you...’ ‘People won’t like you if you _____.’
- ‘Don’t try so hard, it’s not cool.’
- ‘You’re not good enough to _____.’
- ‘You really messed up. You can’t do anything right.’ ‘Another mistake. You are really stupid.’
- ‘Nobody likes you.’
- ‘You can’t do it, so don’t even bother trying.’
- ‘You are the worst friend. Why would anyone want to be friends with you?’

“Now in your journals draw a picture of your inner critic, that means coach we’ve been talking about. Write down some common phrases, negative comments, or criticisms that you may hear it say. Then, practice reframing that negative self-talk to positive, self-affirming statements that will inspire and empower you!”

“Now, let’s pick something that we are having a hard time letting go of. Something we are maybe not proud of, mad at ourselves for, or sad/disappointed about. This can be something that you did, said or even thought.”

“Write it down in your journal. No one will see it. It is just for you. Like this...”

Write the following statement starter on the board and read it aloud. You can complete the statement to be a role model for the students.

I am upset that I _____

“Now, close your eyes and listen for a moment at what your inner critic or judge is saying to you. It may be yelling at you, ‘Why didn’t you study more for that test?’, ‘You should have paid attention in class more.’, ‘Why did you yell at your brother in that way?’ ”

“Notice how all of this internal dialogue feels in your body. What is the pace or fullness of your breath like?”

Distribute worksheet #1.

“On this worksheet, color in the figure using different colors to show how you are feeling at this moment. Red can show heat, anger, tightness. Blue can show cool, light, calm, relaxed. You can add other colors if you wish. Make a color code so you’ll know what each color means or shows.”

“Now, close your eyes again and let’s listen to the softer inner voice that knows your deeper, truer goodness. What does the kind whisper say? Perhaps it reminds you, ‘It’s OK.’, ‘We all make mistakes.’, ‘You can try harder next time.’, ‘Some things take practice.’, ‘You can apologize and move on.’ Notice how your body feels now. What is your breath like now?”

Distribute worksheet #2.

“Now I am going to give you another body outline picture. I’d like you to color in the picture now to reflect how you feel. Did your colors change? Do you have more blue than red now? Remember to include the color code so that you know what each color means.”

“Both of the voices we just listened to are YOU. The key to forgiving yourself is remembering that you always have the power to choose which voice you listen to. Which one helps you to feel better and which one helps you find a solution? Which one gives you ideas to fix the situation or choose more wisely next time? Which one condemns you and makes you feel bad about yourself? Is that helpful or hurtful?” “Which one do you choose? Which will you choose to listen to?”

“Now let’s see if this helps you with the next part. Write down the following statement and complete it in your Choose Love Journal.”

Write the following statement on the board. Again, you may complete this statement to model this for students.

'I forgive myself for _____. I will take responsibility for what is in my control and I will_____'

“Complete the statement. In the first part, write down something you’ve done that you’ve been beating yourself up over....a mistake, a hurt you caused, some wrongdoing that’s weighing heavy on you. In the last part, you may insert a way to make amends and forgive yourself so you can change or get rid of the inner critic’s negative talk and move forward. Maybe apologize, make a better choice next time, ask the person what you can do to make the situation better, etc.”

“Forgiving yourself does not mean forgetting about what you are upset about, or what you may have done. It is about seeing your faults clearly and taking responsibility from a loving place rather than condemning yourself and hating yourself. Forgiveness helps you use your inner power of goodness to direct you and care for you so that you are able to share and connect from that place of peace and love with others.”

Note: This lesson was created by:

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Call To Action

Another way that we can practice self-forgiveness and develop our inner protector is by reminding ourselves of all of our good qualities. In your journal, make a list of friends, family members, neighbors, teachers, pets, etc. that care about you. Now, time yourself. For 30 seconds, write down as many strengths, abilities or positive qualities you have. It’s OK...brag about yourself on paper. Who can write 10 or 20 things.... maybe more....see how many you can list. When the timer goes off, look back at your list. How does it make you feel? You have a lot to offer!



Lesson 6: Celebrating Forgiveness

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Define personal power.
- Analyze the strength of personal power when connected to 4 elements.
- Connect personal power to forgiveness.
- Identify the parts of an effective apology.
- Define amends.
- Generate effective apologies based on scenarios.
- Reflect on forgiveness learning through Forgiveness games.

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

Display a picture of an arrow or show the following image of an arrow being released.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HGIASAOoa0>

Lesson

“Find a comfortable position to sit or stand. Close your eyes and for a minute focus your attention on untangling and untying a knot and the freedom that comes from that.”

“Today is the last day of our Forgiveness Unit. We’ve been learning that Forgiveness is a choice to let go of anger and resentment toward yourself or someone else. It is a decision to surrender any thoughts of revenge and to move forward with your personal power intact.”

“Forgiveness isn’t up to the other person that hurt you; it’s up to you. Forgiveness is a conscious choice you make after weighing your options. The choice you make is for yourself and is for your own benefit.”

“After you make the decision to forgive, it turns into a process. We might still feel anger or we may fall back into anger and that’s natural. You might have to repeat the process of forgiving several times and use a lot of the strategies we’ve spoken about. Forgiveness could take a moment, days, weeks, maybe even years....and that’s OK.”

“I want to take a moment to focus on personal power. What is your personal power? Why is it important to have personal power? How can that benefit you? What is it like when you don’t have personal power?” Allow for responses and reflection.”

“Our personal power tends to be strongest when we are connected to the following four things:

Write the following on the board and read them to students.

- Our life purpose, intentions, dream, or goals
- Friends, family, and community (when we feel connected to the people around us)
- Something bigger than ourselves (this could be a religious or spiritual practice, a large group of people who share your identity, or a movement like the Choose Love Movement)
- Choosing Love (when we give, receive, and choose love, we feel more connected to our personal power)

“Focus your attention on your personal power right now. How full does it feel today? 100%, 80%, 50%? If you think you want to fill up more, choose to do something that will

help boost your personal power. Being courageous, or letting go of your fears, is a way to do this. Practicing gratitude, and finding the positive instead of dwelling on the negative, is another way to do this. Forgiveness, or letting go of the weight of anger, hurt, and resentment, is another way. Turn to your neighbor and share one way that you can boost your personal power right away today! Another way to boost your personal power is to make amends with yourself and with someone who has hurt you.”

“Here are four steps you can follow to help you.” Write these things on the board and read them aloud. Ask students to copy them in their journals. It would be helpful to give an example of an apology using these four steps.

1. ‘I’m sorry for.....’ Name the behavior that was hurtful and describe the impact it had on the other person.
2. ‘I didn’t make the best choice. It was wrong because...’
3. ‘I take responsibility for my choices. Next time I will....’
4. ‘I ask that you forgive me.’ Or ‘I would be grateful if you can forgive me.’ ”

“Turn to the person next to you and practice giving a sincere apology using these 4 steps.”

To conclude our forgiveness unit, we are going to play a game to celebrate our accomplishments- all that we have learned, the power of forgiveness that we will practice moving forward in this school year.”

Play the following game, or one of your choosing- anything to get the kids to relax and have fun to celebrate the end of this unit. The game below is a good reminder of how practicing forgiveness helps you untangle and let go of challenging emotions, get along better with others, be happier, and have more fun in life.

Untangle the Knot- Assign students to medium-sized groups, approximately 8 people. Instruct groups to each form a circle, facing inward. Students should extend their arms, and cross their arms at the wrist. Next, instruct students to grasp hands with two different people across from them.

Students must now work together to try to untangle the knot without letting go of any hands. Once they have untangled themselves, and are still holding hands, encourage them to lean back, balancing their weight, and try to sit down. Then have them stand back up again as a group, all while still holding hands. As an added challenge, have each group race to untangle themselves and perform the activities. You can give all groups a small treat to reward them for and their cooperation and communication.

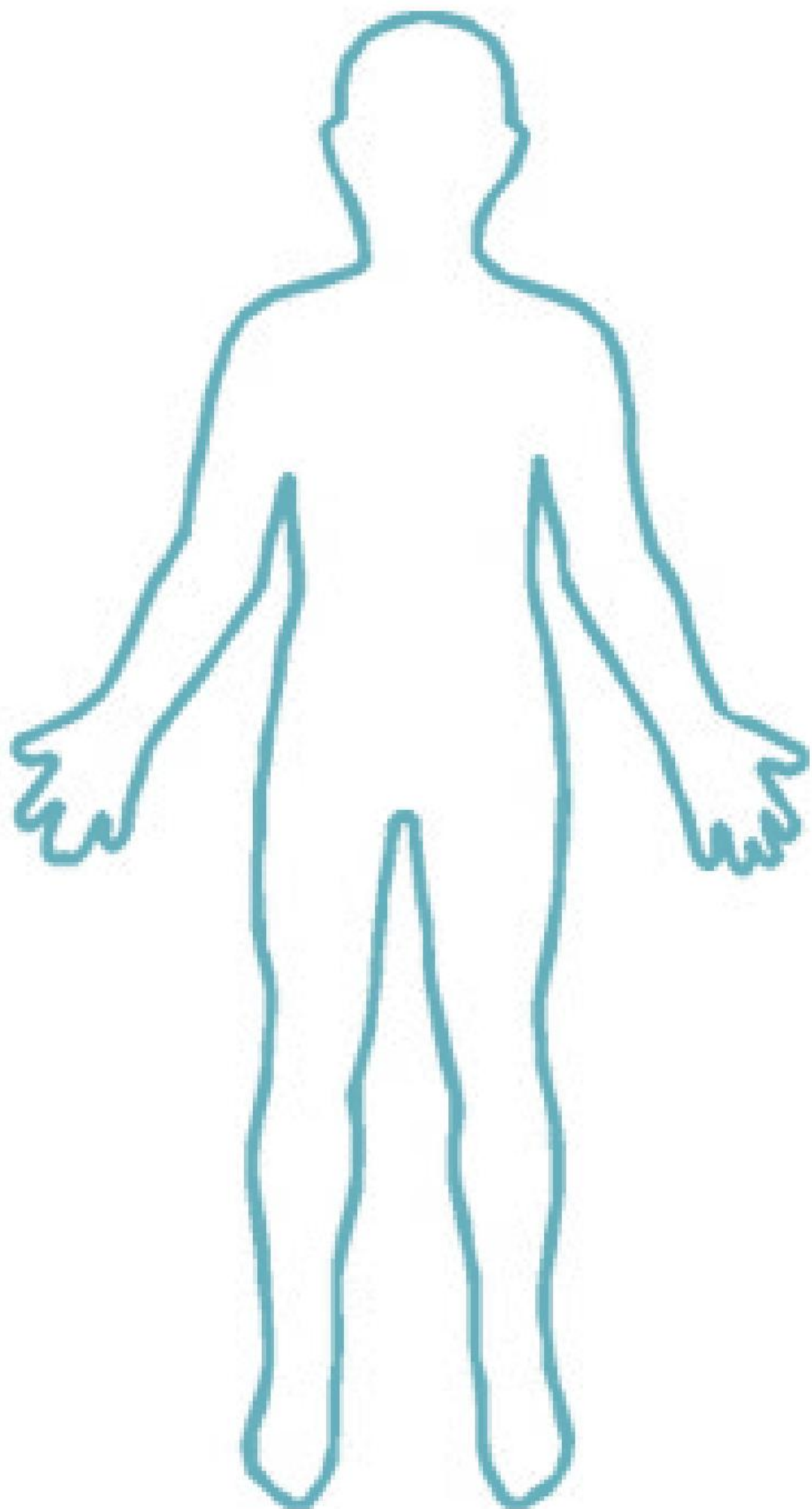
***Based on social distancing restrictions, an alternate activity option could be to give students a piece of string**

“We’ve learned a lot about forgiveness and a lot more about ourselves. We’ve learned another important way that we can better connect with others and lead healthier and happier lives. We’ll be moving on to the final unit of the Choose Love Formula which is Compassion in Action. I hope you’ll continue to learn more about forgiveness through research on the internet, finding role models, reading books, poems, and stories of forgiveness. Remember forgiveness is a choice you can make anytime that allows you to move forward with your personal power back. It helps you let go of the weight of anger, resentment, guilt, sadness, and other challenging emotions. I hope you’ll choose forgiveness!”

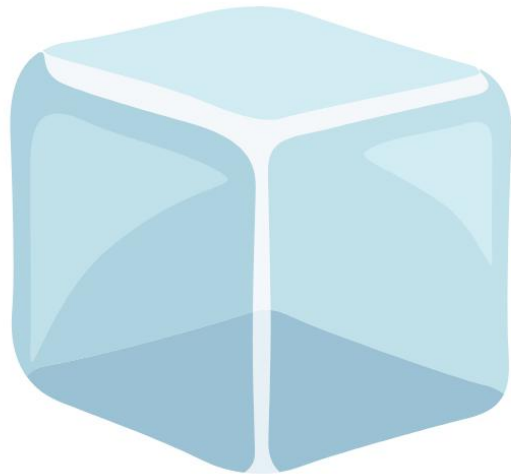
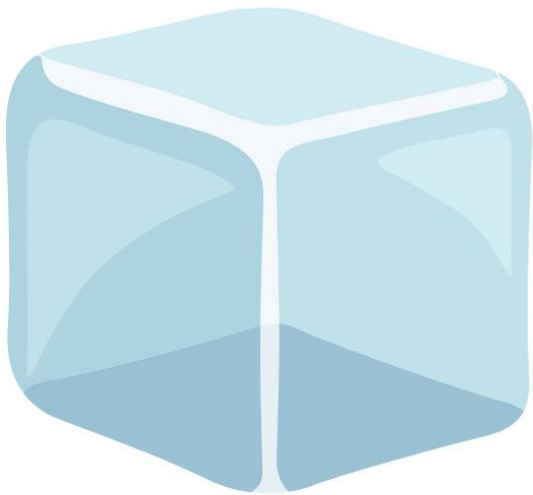
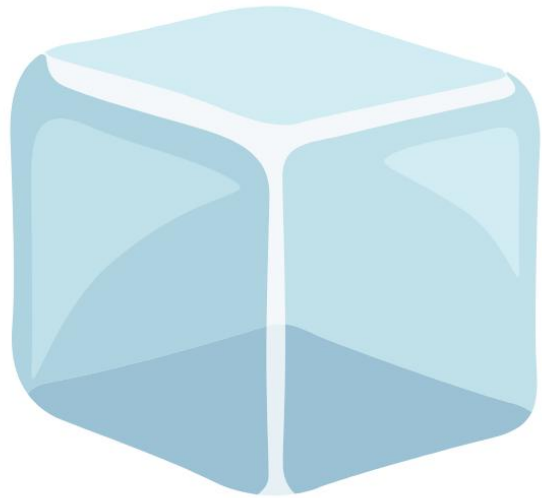
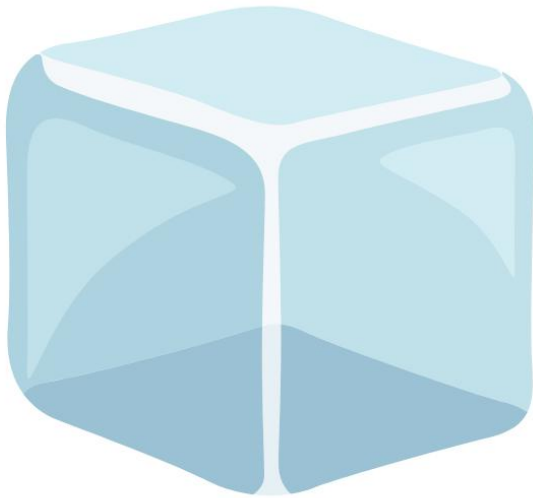
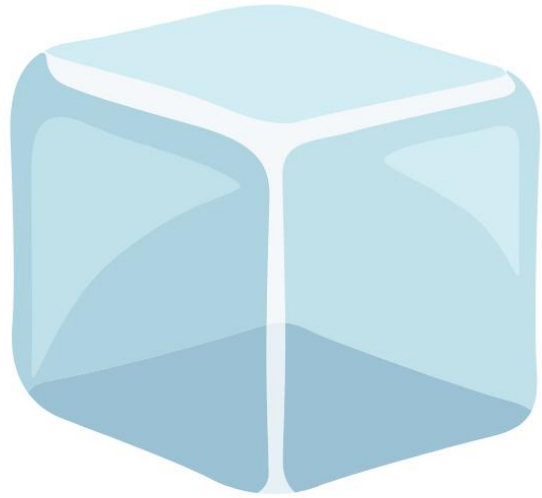
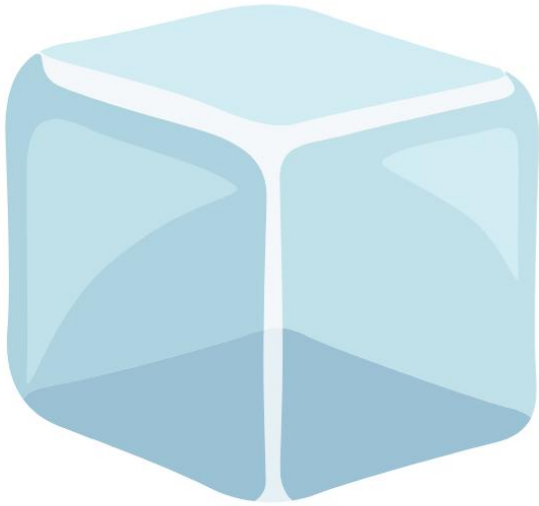
Call to Action

Think of a difficult situation you’ve experienced or are going through. How can you show forgiveness to yourself or others and move forward from this situation? What choices can you make? How can you Choose Love? Finish the following sentence...

To move forward, I can_____.



How I Like To Chill Out



Acrostic Poem

Forgiveness is about letting go of the past so we can
move on to a better future.

F

O

R

Acrostic Poem

Forgiveness is about letting go of the past so we can
move on to a better future.

G

I

V

E

Acrostic Poem

Forgiveness is about letting go of the past so we can move on to a better future.

N

E

S

S



Grade 6 | **FORGIVENESS** | Extension Lessons

EXTENSION LESSON 1:

Musical Hot Feelings Hacky Sac

Educator Preparation

- Bring a small soft ball/bean bag/object to class. This will be something that will be tossed around like a “hot potato” in a class activity.
- Prepare some music to play during the activity.

Activity

“When you are holding a grudge against someone or if you have some unresolved conflict with another person how do you feel?” Allow for responses. Responses should include: angry, frustrated, sad, hurt, confused, resentful, etc.

“How does your body feel when you have some of the feelings you just mentioned?”
Allow for responses. You may choose to write these on the board.

“I know when I feel angry and frustrated, I feel really hot. I call those feelings ‘hot feelings’ because sometimes your face can get red, you might feel a burning feeling in your stomach, and you might even feel like a volcano full of hot lava! You may have sweaty palms and feel flushed with the anxiety and stress of these challenging feelings from unresolved conflicts with others. When you touch something hot, do you want to hold onto it? No! You want to let it go as quickly as you can.”

“Think of some grudge or resentment you are carrying around and how it makes you feel. Imagine your ‘hot feelings’. In this game, the object we are tossing around are the ‘hot feelings’, those difficult feelings that you just want to get rid of. Pass it around the circle while the music plays, letting it go as quickly as you can. Imagine the ball is full of your angry, frustrated feelings....all of the challenging feelings that make you feel hot, anxious and stressed. You want to let those feelings go quickly.”

“When the music stops, whoever is holding the object has to keep holding it until the rest of the group says, ‘we’re sorry’. The person holding the object puts it down and says, ‘That’s okay, I forgive you.’”

“Then that person is out, and the game continues until only one player is left.”

Afterwards, debrief with the class. Allow them to share how it felt to get rid of these feelings.

“This activity helps you become aware of your feelings, particularly those that you may have because of an unresolved situation with someone. We practiced letting go of these ‘hot feelings’ by imagining that they were the object that we tossed around and got rid of quickly. Sometimes it’s not that easy. But being mindful of your feelings is the first step. And often, if we’re able, forgiveness allows us to let go of these negative emotions and feel better.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 2:

Two Minute Forgiveness Dump

Educator Preparation

Write the following quote on the board:

Rather than a favor we do for someone else, forgiveness is, first and foremost, a favor we do for ourselves. The core power of forgiveness is that it returns to us the power to be happy. – Robin Casarjian

Activity

“Who wants to be happy? I know I do. Let’s see if we can figure out some ways to help us be happier. I’ve written a quote on the board. Let’s take a look at it.” Read the quote on the board.

“What do you think the author meant by this quote? Do you agree? Why?” Allow for responses and discussion.

“We mentioned before that it’s hard to feel happy when we are angry. While feeling angry is a natural response, feeling too much anger can be unhealthy. When we focus on anger and resentment, it triggers our lizard and numbat brains. They release stress hormones into our bodies, which can lead to poor decision making. When you feel very angry, you might not think clearly and might make choices that can hurt yourself and others. This is why it’s important to recognize when we feel angry and learn how to calm down, let go of anger, and express ourselves in positive ways.”

“It’s helpful to label our angry feelings to manage them. Sometimes we experience small irritations or annoyances. Let’s call these pinches. On a scale of 1-10, these are up to about a level three of anger and tend to be easy to brush off. What are some examples of pinches?”

“If we don’t address these pinches they can sometimes lead to what we can call crunches. These are more intense feelings of anger or frustration. What was a 2 or 3 can become a 6 or 7, or even a 10 if we bottle up and don’t share or express the feelings and somehow manage it. Situations that challenge our values or identities often lead to crunches too. What are some examples of crunches?”

“When you are experiencing a crunch, you may feel very strong feelings of anger and may be more rigid in your stance or your feelings, not willing to budge and really stuck. You may even question whether or not you want to continue in the relationship with the person who caused the crunch. When someone has hurt or betrayed you, the feelings of anger can be very intense. Recognizing these feelings is so important. And then we have to do something to let go of these feelings. The longer we hold onto them, the more burden/weight we carry around, the more damage we do to ourselves, the more we negatively affect the quality of our lives, and the harder it is to deal with them in a positive way.”

“We talked about visualization or imagining letting go, drawing how you imagine letting go, and Forgiveness Breaths. These are all healthy and effective ways to deal with our feelings, to calm ourselves, and to let go of challenging feelings. Another way is to write down how you feel; dump out all of those feelings onto the page. We are going to do something called a two minute forgiveness dump.”

“You are going to take out your journal and open it to a fresh page. Close your eyes for a minute and think of something that someone has done to you that has left you feeling a crunch level of anger. When I say start, I want you to put your pencil to the paper and just free write till I say stop. Don’t worry about spelling, punctuation, or anything. Just get your thoughts and feelings down on paper. Express how you feel about the person and what happened and how it’s affected you. Just free write and see where it takes you. You will be writing for two minutes without taking your pencil off the paper or stopping.....keep going, keep writing until I say STOP!”

Allow students to write nonstop for two minutes.

“How did it feel to dump out your feelings on paper? Did you enjoy expressing how you feel? Did writing down how you feel help you to let go of some of the weight of the feelings and situation? Did it help you move you to a place of forgiveness? Remember that writing is a very powerful tool that you have at your fingertips to help deal with challenging feelings and situations.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

EXTENSION LESSON 3:

Revisiting Mindful Minutes

Educator Preparation

- Preview the following Mindful Minutes (guided meditations) created By Dave Romanelli (Soundcloud, 2011). You and your students will be listening to one of your choosing during this lesson.

[“Let It Go”](#) -- [“Breathe”](#) -- [“Smile”](#) -- [“Ride The Wave”](#) -- [“Bounce Back”](#) -- [“Loving Kindness”](#) -- [“Grateful Me”](#)

- Have the following benefits written on the board:

Benefits of Meditation and Mindfulness:

- Lowers cortisol levels (cortisol causes stress)
- Decreases the sympathetic nervous system (which causes the fight, flight or freeze mode when you are angry, scared, or anxious)
- Increases your immune system function (which boosts your health)
- Increases connections in the brain
- Improves your concentration
- Improves attention span
- Increases activity in the prefrontal cortex of the brain (the place in charge of planning and judgment)
- Improved cognitive function
- Reduces depression
- Reduces anxiety and nervousness
- Reduces self-doubt
- Increases happiness
- Increases compassion

Activity

“As we talk about forgiveness, it will probably bring up some thoughts and feelings that are tough to handle. One way to manage these challenging feelings and thoughts is to practice mindfulness. Mindfulness is really just thinking about thinking. One form of mindfulness is meditation and it has lots of benefits. Meditation is where you train your mind to think in a way that puts your concentration on thoughts that reduce your anxiety

and promote happiness. Meditation helps clean out your brain of stress....just like wiping a slate clean. It's like a restart or redo for your brain. Let's remind ourselves of these benefits."

Reference list of benefits written on the board.

"On occasion through this program, we've started a lesson with a little Mindful Minute. Today we are going to take a different Mindful Minute. I'm going to play an audio link that will walk us through a short meditation. We tried these in our Courage Unit. I think it's important for us to go back to these meditations as we talk about forgiveness."

"When we practice forgiveness, we need to deal with some challenging emotions such as anger, frustration, hurt, sadness, and resentment. We need to have some ways to clear our mind, focus our thoughts and intentions in positive ways, and calm ourselves so that we can handle and move past these challenging feelings and thoughts."

"These meditations were created by David Romanelli who is a best-selling author and creator of the Yeah Dave Website which has a lot of great information to help people get rid of anxiety and stress, be mindful, and lead happy and healthy lives. Walking ourselves through one of these meditations might seem a little strange or uncomfortable at first if you've never done meditation like this before."

"Remember all of the benefits we just discussed. I promise you if you just listen and let yourself go a little, you'll experience some immediate benefits. The more we practice mindfulness and meditation, the easier it becomes and the more we will enjoy it. See if this type of mindfulness makes us feel different, feel calmer, feel better. Let's see if it may put us in a spot where our hearts and minds are open to forgiveness."

These Mindful Minutes were created specifically for teenagers and for our program. Keep these on hand so that you can use any one of them again to help students practice this mindful practice, increase their focus, and reduce their anxiety. This would be great before exams. Did you know there was a study that showed that students who meditated before an exam did better than those that didn't?

You may choose to share these links with students or parents. You can also encourage students to look online for more information on mindfulness and meditation. There is a lot of great information on its benefits and practices.

Time permitting, you can have students debrief by writing a few sentences of reflection in their journals. How did this exercise make them feel? Do they feel more relaxed? How could they apply this to their life? How could this practice help them?

EXTENSION LESSON 4:

Ways to Chill Out

Educator Preparation

Prepare/distribute the 'How I Like to Chill Out' Handout for each student. Start a list on the board with the heading, 'How I Like to Chill Out'.

Activity

"Have you ever heard someone say, 'They make me so mad!?' When we feel angry, we might think it's because someone is doing something to us to create those feelings. While they might be using a negative behavior towards us, we are 100% responsible, or accountable, for our own feelings. They are not in control or in charge of our feelings; we are."

"People also sometimes say 'push my buttons' or 'yank my chain'. If someone is pushing your buttons, or yanking your chain, it means they know exactly what to do to make you upset. The problem with this is that it assumes that the other person has control over you and your feelings and reactions. It means that they have power over you and how you respond, rather than you having power over yourself and how you respond."

"This is what we mean by maintaining your personal power, or agency. You get to choose how to respond to any situation. When we talk about forgiveness, it means that you have the choice to feel angry, resentful or hurt....and you also have the choice to deal with these feelings and let them go."

"When you choose to forgive, you activate a neural network connecting different regions of the brain that can result in a personal sense of relief (Newberg, d'Aquili, Newberg, & deMarici, 2001). When you let go of anger, resentment, spite, or the possibility of revenge, it helps you leave the lizard, or your fight/flight/freeze mode. As we know, this can help lower your blood pressure and slow down your heart rate, and helps you think more clearly."

"Remember when we had a snowball fight and we each ended up with a crumbled piece of paper, a leftover snowball? On this piece of paper, there was an idea that your classmate wrote down of how to deal with our anger, express it, or let go of it in a positive way. Today we are going to use these ideas to come up with our own list that we

can use in the future. We are going to call it, 'How I Like to Chill Out'. Remember these are ways to express or let go of anger and other negative feelings that are healthy and positive....they won't hurt us or others."

"We can start the list by writing down 'Forgive'. Now, let's share some of the ideas that you had in your snowballs." Allow time for various students to share ideas and add them to the list on the board.

"Now it's your turn. Using this list and your own ideas, complete the 'How I Like to Chill Out' Sheet that I'm giving you. Each ice cube is a 'chill out' cube. In it you will write a positive way to express or let go of your anger...a way to calm down...that is healthy and won't hurt you or someone else. If you run out of cubes, draw in some new ones." Allow time for students to complete these sheets.

"It feels good to be in control of how we respond and to be in control of our feelings. Forgiving gives us our personal power back. Having healthy ways to deal with our feelings gives us power also."

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 5:

Two Parts to the Heart

Educator Preparation

Reference the “heart hands” image in the digital/downloadable worksheets packet.

Activity

“So we know the power of forgiveness. And we know it’s a choice only we can make. Imagining ‘cutting the cord’ to hurt, pain and anger helps us move towards forgiveness. Thinking about the freedom you get when you cut that cord to the negativity and getting our personal back is empowering and inspires us to forgive. Sometimes it’s also helpful to try to put yourself in the other person’s shoes, to try to understand why they may have done something. By doing this, just like when you forgive, you aren’t saying what they did was ok or taking away their responsibility for what they did. You are just trying to step back and take a different perspective. Trying to see another perspective opens up a window of understanding and helps us make connections, build bridges, resolve conflicts and strengthen relationships.”

“Raise your hand if you can make a heart with your two hands. Show me your hearts and I’ll show you mine. You can make them two ways....with your hands right side up or upside down. Try both ways.” Show both ways. You may even show pictures of these two ways.

“Now I’d like you to make a heart with a partner using your hand and their hand. Let this remind you that two hands make a heart and there are always two sides to a story. Forgiveness is two hands, two sides coming together. Forgiveness is making a heart, connecting, and choosing love....even when it’s hard.”

“With a partner’s help, in your journals, trace your hands upside down so that the inside makes a heart. Make sure you trace a heart for each of you. Think of an argument or falling out you had with another individual. On each side of the heart, write down each person’s side of the story, two different perspectives. This is nudging the numbat to hug the human. Does this make you see the situation differently? In what ways? See how this simple exercise may help you in choosing forgiveness.”

SEL Skills Taught Self-awareness; Self-management; Social awareness; Relationship skills; Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 6:

Proactive vs. Reactive

Educator Preparation

None.

Activity

“Today I’d like you to draw a circle in your journals. Make it big enough so that you can write some things down in it. Draw a small sunshine in here. Let’s write down all of the things we can control or change in this circle. Who can get us started?” Make a circle on the board and write down their ideas. This should include: my words, my actions, my thoughts, my feelings, my behaviors, my ideas, my choices, my effort, etc.

“Now make a circle outside of that inner circle. Draw a small storm cloud in it. Let’s brainstorm all of the things we can’t control or can’t change and write them in this circle.” Draw this outer circle and write down students’ ideas. This should include: Other peoples’ feelings, thoughts, ideas, choices, actions, mistakes, behaviors, etc.

“As we’ve said before, we can’t always choose what happens to us, but we can always choose how we respond. When you are proactive, it means you focus on the things that you can control or change and try to make things better.”

“A proactive person is using their human brain by dealing with their feelings, calming down so they can think clearly, and thoughtfully choosing their actions and responses. A proactive person says, ‘I can control my feelings and reactions.’, ‘Let’s look at the choices or alternatives.’, ‘Let me think about the consequences of my choices.’, ‘I can...’, ‘I will...’, ‘I choose...’, ‘I will make a responsible choice.’, “What’s the best solution to this?”, ‘I won’t let what you did negatively affect me.’, ‘I will think before I respond.’, ‘I won’t react in the same negative way that you behaved.”

“The reactive person is the complete opposite. That person thinks that everything is out of their control. They respond without thinking, letting their reactive and impulsive lizard brain drive their choices and behaviors which means a lot of ‘flight or fight’ responses. A reactive person says, ‘I have to do that.’, ‘I must...’, ‘I can’t...’, ‘There’s nothing I can do.’,

‘They make me so mad.’, ‘I can’t control my feelings and actions.’, ‘I can’t let it go.’, ‘I need to give it right back to them.’, ‘They hurt me so I’m going to hurt them right back.’”

“Who do you think is going to handle situations and problems better, the proactive person or the reactive person? Who do you think is going to be healthier and happier? Who is going to be better able to get along with others and resolve conflicts? Who would make the choice to forgive to get their personal power back, the proactive or reactive person?”

“When we choose to forgive, we are practicing responsible decision-making, and being proactive. We are finding the courage to make choices out of love instead of fear and hate. Here’s an example of a situation: Your younger sister comes up and kicks you. What would a reactive person do? How would they respond?” Allow for varied responses which would include something like, scream at her and kick her back.

“What would a proactive person do? How would he/she respond?” Allow for varied responses such as, let her know that that’s not acceptable or that it hurt you, ask her to stop, walk away, go let your parents know so they can handle it, etc.

“I’m going to share some scenarios. I’d like you to raise your hand and tell me what the proactive response would be. How would you or could you forgive this person?”

Situation:

- Someone started a rumor about you.
- Someone posted something nasty about you on social media.
- A group won’t let you sit with them at lunch.
- Your mom didn’t pay attention when you were sharing something that was important to you.
- An older student makes fun of you in the halls.
- Your best friend is talking behind your back.
- Your friend invited everyone but you to the party.

You can ask for students to suggest other scenarios to respond to.

You can have students share what the reactive responses might be as well to highlight the difference in response. Time permitting, you could have students role play these scenarios showing the reactive and proactive responses.

SEL Skills Taught Self-awareness; Self-management; Social awareness; Relationship skills; Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 7:

Trash It

Educator Preparation

Write the following sentences on the board:

- Forgiveness is to accept and love someone unconditionally.
- Forgiveness is looking past what someone has done to realize who they still are.
- Forgiveness is realizing the people we love are as imperfect as we are, and by loving them we love ourselves.
- Forgiveness is letting go of past hurts done by someone, in hopes of a better tomorrow.
- Forgiveness is about living in the present, not in the past, and moving positively towards the future.
- Forgiveness is about accepting a different outcome to a situation.
- Forgiveness is understanding that we all make mistakes.
- Forgiveness is looking at another side of a story.
- Forgiveness is a choice we make for ourselves so we can lead a healthy and happy life.

Preview and cue the following video on [Forgiveness](https://youtu.be/lbwVHAV_qU4). (https://youtu.be/lbwVHAV_qU4)

Activity

“I have written some sentences about forgiveness on the board. Let me read them to you. Close your eyes and just think about them and how you feel about them.” Read all of the statements.

“Is there anything else you would add from what we’ve discussed and what you’ve learned?” Allow for students to volunteer responses that you may add to the list.

“Take a minute to write down the statements about Forgiveness that stood out to you and have the most significance for you. You can select some or all of those listed or write another of your own.”

“Thinking about some of the statements we’ve just shared and talked about, let’s watch a quick video on forgiveness.”

Play the video: [Forgiveness](#)

“Now I’d like you to write down some hurts you are carrying around with you. On a scrap of paper, jot down at least one thing that someone has done to you that is causing you pain, sadness, and anger.”

“The students in the video erased the hurt that they had written on the chalk board when they chose to forgive. Can you choose to forgive and erase or get rid of the hurt you are carrying around? I am going to walk around with the trash can. If you are ready to forgive, crumple the paper and throw it away.....say to yourself or out loud if you feel like it, ‘I forgive.’ Feel the freedom, relief and peace of letting go.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 8:

Pep Talk

Discussion

“Oftentimes, the inner critic is trying to protect you from a sometimes scary world, though it may not seem like it at the time or at first.”

“For example, it might tell you to not try out for the team because it doesn’t want you to be embarrassed by failing. It might tell you to hide your real self because it’s afraid that if you show people the real you, they won’t like you.”

“The inner critic makes choices out of fear instead of love. One way to start a conversation with your inner critic is to ask questions about what it’s saying to get to the truth. You can say, ‘Will this really happen?’, ‘Is this really how they feel?’, ‘Is this an exaggeration?’, ‘How do I know this is true?’, ‘What if that’s not true?’ ”

“Then, you can use positive affirmations to shift negative thoughts to positive ones. We’ve talked about how important it is to choose positive thoughts and how, in doing so, we can rewire our brain for positivity. So let’s practice this valuable skill again. This will help us to forgive ourselves.”

“Let’s practice reframing a few negative statements. For example, ‘Don’t ask for help or you’ll look stupid.’ Turning this to positive self-talk we could say, ‘It’s Ok to ask for help. Everyone needs help sometimes. Asking for help shows courage. The sooner I ask for help, the sooner I can learn this and be successful.’”

“Give me some help on these: Call out the following and have students volunteer a way to reframe the negative talk. You can add more statements. And you may need to model some reframed responses at first.

- **‘Don’t wear that or they’ll make fun of you...’**
- **‘People won’t like you if you _____.’**
- **‘Don’t try so hard, it’s not cool.’**
- **‘You’re not good enough to _____.’**
- **‘You really messed up. You can’t do anything right.’**
- **‘Another mistake. You are really stupid.’**
- **‘Nobody likes you.’**

- 'You can't do it, so don't even bother trying.'
- 'You are the worst friend. Why would anyone want to be friends with you?'"

"Now in your journals draw a picture of your inner critic, that mean coach we've been talking about. Write down some common phrases, negative comments, or criticisms that you may hear it say. Then, practice reframing that negative self-talk to positive, self-affirming statements that will inspire and empower you!"

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 9:

Inner Protector

Educator Preparation

Prepare music to play during activity.

Activity

“We’ve been talking about the importance of self-forgiveness. Rick Hanson, Ph.D., a psychologist and author of many books, including ‘Hardwiring Happiness’, says that we have both an inner critic and an inner protector.”

“The inner critic as we discussed is tough on you and can use mistakes to put you down with negative self-talk. The inner critic has the perspective of the glass half empty, the negative way of seeing things. The inner protector puts those mistakes into perspective and looks at the bright side. The inner protector sees the glass as half full, the positive way of seeing things (Hanson, 2013).”

“Rather than criticizing ourselves for our imperfections or the mistakes we’ve made, we can learn to embrace our uniqueness and love ourselves in spite of our faults or the ways in which we’ve failed or done wrong. This doesn’t mean having a big ego and being self-centered, self absorbed or conceited. It just means having an attitude of gratitude and making the conscious choice to love yourself, forgive yourself, and move past any setbacks.”

“Dr. Hanson suggests many different strategies for how to do this. We’re going to practice a couple of them today. The first way is to create an awareness that you are cared for. Right now in your journal, I’d like you to make a list of friends, family members, neighbors, teachers, pets, etc. that care about you. And I don’t want a short list.....you are cared for, you are loved..... let this list really remind you of that.” Allow a few minutes for students to create their lists.

“Another way that we can practice self-forgiveness and develop our inner protector is by reminding ourselves of all of our good qualities. Many times we are quick to point out the negative traits we may have. We spend a lot of time and energy on the negatives and bringing ourselves down and this makes us forget about all of the great things that we

can do and have to offer. When you forgive, your immune system and heart not only get stronger, but your self esteem grows. It's important to celebrate our great qualities, abilities, and strengths as this will create a happier and healthier life."

"I'm going to give you 30 seconds to write down as many strengths, abilities or positive qualities you have. It's OK...brag about yourself on paper. Who can write 10 or 20 things... maybe more....see how many you can list."

After 30 seconds, have students put their pencils down and instruct them on the last part of the activity. **"To finish up today, I am going to put on some music. When the music plays, walk around the room. When the music stops, find a partner (or group of 3 if needed) and share with them one of your strengths/abilities from the list. When the music starts again, high five your partner and walk around again until the music starts and you find a different partner and repeat the exercise."**

Stop and start the music several times so that students can partner up with many different students for this exercise. **"How did that feel? Moving forward, let's ditch the inner critic and embrace the inner protector. Let's forgive ourselves, celebrate ourselves, and be proud of the amazing people that we are!"**

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 10 :

FOR-GIVE-NESS Poetry

Educator Preparation

Break class into groups and assign each group a set of letters that when combined spell the word 'Forgiveness'. See/prepare to distribute Acrostic Poem digital/printable worksheet. Depending on class size, there may be more than one group working on a set of letters. After the exercise the groups will come together so that the class can create a final acrostic poem for the full word, 'Forgiveness'.

Activity

“We’ve learned quite a bit about forgiveness and how important it is. Today we’re going to express our thoughts, feelings, and awareness about forgiveness through poetry. I am going to break you up into small groups. Each group will be assigned a letter chunk, either FOR- GIVE or NESS. More than one group may have the same letter chunk. In your groups, create an acrostic poem for your chunk of letters. Then we’ll come back together as a class to share our ideas and create a final poem for the full word, ‘Forgiveness’. It will be interesting and fun to see, hear, and share each other’s ideas, thoughts, and reflections on forgiveness.”

Give groups time to work on their chunk of letters. Then have the groups come back to the whole class and share what they came up with. Groups and the whole class will need to be respectful of different ideas and show cooperation and teamwork to complete the finished poem. Time permitting, you can have students write their own individual acrostic poems, or other style of poem, for forgiveness in their journals as an in class or out of class assignment or extra credit opportunity.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 11 :

Group Forgiveness Pose

Educator Preparation

Assign students to small groups of 5 or 6.

Activity

“Let’s begin with a Mindful Minute. Find a comfortable position to sit in and close your eyes. Focus your attention for the next minute on a bridge. Think about the strong foundation of the bridge and how it connects two things together. Take a deep belly breath and focus on that connection.”

“We’ve already created our own Forgiveness Pose. Today let’s get connected by creating a Group Forgiveness Pose. We know that forgiveness is a powerful and healing personal practice. Its power multiplies when we practice forgiveness as a group.”

“I will divide you into small groups. In these groups, work together to create a Group Forgiveness Pose that reflects forgiveness. Let your pose show how forgiveness connects us, mends fences, and strengthens relationships. Remember as you work in small groups to work as a team, being respectful to one another, listening to different ideas and perspectives, and cooperating with one another. And make sure in whatever group pose you have, that all members of the group feel comfortable. Make sure you can hold it for a minute or more.”

“Let’s take a couple of minutes to create your group poses and then we’ll share our poses with the larger group.” Allow time for students to work as a team to come up with their Group Forgiveness Pose. Then have each group share their pose with the larger class.

After, you can debrief as a class with the following questions for reflection and discussion:

1. How was the experience different forming poses with multiple people?
2. What decision making skills did you use to decide what pose to make?
3. Did you work well as a team? Why or Why Not?
4. What did you do that helped you to work well as a team?
5. What thoughts or feelings do you have about this experience?
6. How did this build connection?

“Forgiveness can be practiced in many different ways. Different cultures and religions have different ways of practicing forgiveness. Forgiveness can be practiced by yourself, with another person, or in a small or large group. I encourage you to do some research to find out more about the different ways that people practice forgiveness. Interview some people or see what you can find in the library or on the internet.” Time permitting, you can have students do some research in class or out of class as an assignment or extra credit opportunity. Have them write up or share with the class some different ways that different people or different countries practice forgiveness.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making



Grade 6| [COMPASSION IN ACTION](#) |Overview

GRADE 6: COMPASSION IN ACTION

OVERVIEW

Scientists, from Charles Darwin to contemporary neuroscience researchers, have found that human beings are wired for compassion.

Compassion has two components: the first is **empathy**, which means putting yourself in someone else's shoes and trying to feel what that person feels, and the second is **action**, which means helping someone in need and performing acts of kindness without expecting anything in return.

In all of our Choose Love programs we teach that it is not enough to just understand someone else's suffering -- you need to do something to help them if you're practicing Compassion in Action.

When a person thinks in a compassionate manner, they activate the neurochemistry of kindness, which begins with the release of the peptide hormone oxytocin (Meyer-Lindenberg, Domes, Kirsch, & Heinrichs, 2011). Oxytocin then activates dopamine and serotonin, which contribute to feelings of happiness and optimism (Dolen, Darvishzadeh, Huang, & Malenka, 2013).

The neuro-keys of compassion are the vagus nerve (which causes the feeling of "warm fuzzies"), the inferior parietal cortex, the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, the hypothalamus, and the nucleus accumbens (Damasio & Carvalho, 2013). The "compassion" exercises activate the neuro-dominoes of compassion, beginning with oxytocin.

Ultimately, compassion in action drives connection. Empathy is different from sympathy. Sympathy is when you feel sorry or pity, which drives disconnection.

The lessons and activities in this unit help students make choices that benefit their minds, hearts, bodies, and relationships by encouraging them to not only think about how someone else is feeling, but also to step outside of their own "busy-ness" to help the

other person feel better. Students apply their empathy and communication skills to support one another through compassionate action. This improves students' problem-solving and decision-making abilities.

LESSONS

Lesson 1: Sharing Our Gifts

Lesson 2: The Golden Rule

Lesson 3: Our Compassion Muscle

Lesson 4: Caring for Ourselves

Lesson 5: We Can Change the World

Lesson 6: Choose Love Commitment

EXTENSION LESSONS

Ext Lesson 1: Choose Love Constitution

Ext. Lesson 2: Sharing 'Gifts'

Ext. Lesson 3: Compassion Quotes

Ext. Lesson 4: Common Ground

Ext Lesson 5: Compassion Muscle

Ext. Lesson 6: Power of Our Words

Ext Lesson 7: Pay Attention

Ext Lesson 8: Dignity and The Golden Rule

Ext Lesson 9: Being Kind to me from A to Z

Ext. Lesson 10: Mind in a Jar & Compassion Breath

Ext. Lesson 11: The Willow Tree

Ext. Lesson 12: Random acts of kindness

Ext. Lesson 13: Choose Love Portrait



Lesson 1: Sharing Our Gifts

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Define Compassion in Action.➤ Practice diaphragmatic breathing as a Compassion Breath➤ Generate a list of personal gifts➤ Identify 1-2 personal gifts to share with the class, school and community	<p><u>CSED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Moral Character➤ Performance Character➤ Intellectual Character <p><u>SEL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Self Awareness➤ Self Management➤ Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

- Write “Courage + Gratitude + Forgiveness + Compassion in Action = Choosing Love” on the board.
- Write the definition of compassion on the board
 - *Compassion is the understanding of a problem or the suffering of another and acting to solve the problem or alleviate the suffering.*
- Prepare to identify examples of courageous behavior that are relevant to the students in your class.
- Have index cards or slips of paper for each student.
- Draw a picture of a gift box on a large piece of chart paper or poster board. Students will tape their ‘gift’ to the gift box as part of the activity. You could also choose to have a gift box where students drop their index card or slip of paper.

Lesson

“The last character value in the formula for choosing love is compassion in action. Let’s combine our final character value with something we’ve been doing all year, diaphragmatic breathing. Let’s learn about a Compassion Breath.”

“Place one hand on your heart and one hand on your belly. Close your eyes. Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose...and slowly breathe out through your mouth. When you breathe in, feel your belly rise and imagine your heart growing bigger as it fills with love and compassion. As you breathe in, think to yourself, ‘May my heart be open to show compassion to myself and others.’ Continue breathing slowly and deeply, in through your nose and out through your mouth.”

“As we keep breathing, let’s relax our bodies. Inhale, and bring your attention to the top of your head. Place your hands on the top of your head. Relax your head and neck and say to yourself, ‘May my mind be calm and relaxed so that I can show compassion to myself and others’. Place both hands on your heart and say, ‘May my heart be open to practicing compassion.’ Now, relax your legs and feet and say, ‘May my feet carry me safely, and may I bring compassion wherever I go.’ Finally, relax your whole body and say to yourself, ‘ May I bring compassion to the whole world.’”

“Take one more slow, deep breath and picture yourself spreading kindness and compassion to yourself and others. Then open your eyes. You should be feeling more relaxed. Are your mind and heart feeling calmer and more at ease? Are you feeling less stressed and more compassion?”

Compassion Breaths are a great mindfulness tool to settle that mind of ours that has thoughts and feelings swirling about like a tornado. Breathing in this way is a way to show self compassion. It helps us relax and de-stress and move away from negative thoughts and feelings and focus on compassion. We can use Compassion Breaths to nudge the numbat to leave the lizard and hug the human brain which allows us to better act, respond, and interact with others.”

“Just like courage, gratitude and forgiveness, compassion is a choice and has many benefits. What does compassion mean to you?” Allow for responses and discussion.

“Compassion in action is the understanding of a problem or suffering of another and

acting to solve the problem or alleviate the suffering. We add ‘in action’, because we want to go beyond just understanding how someone feels and actually take action to make them feel better.”

“When we have compassion, we are aware of the pain or suffering of others, and have a desire to alleviate it. During this Compassion in Action Unit, we are going to learn more about what compassion is, learn skills to become more compassionate, and learn ways to demonstrate compassion in action in our lives. Compassion in action has a ripple effect. When we take action to increase compassion and love, it has a profound impact on many- we all benefit.”

“Right now, let’s write the Choose Love Formula and the definition of compassion in your journals. Next, I’d like you to write down a personal learning goal you have for yourself for this Compassion in Action Unit. What do you hope to learn in this unit that we are now beginning? You can write down more than one thing. Write down your Compassion Learning Goal(s) in your journal. Finally, I’d like you to take a few minutes to make a drawing that represents your Compassionate Learning Goal and what Compassion means to you.”

Allow time for students to work on this. Then have students share their Compassion Learning Goal(s) and/or their drawings.

“Now, we are going to do a self-esteem building and team building exercise to set the tone for the rest of this unit. Everyone in this class is valuable and brings special gifts to the class. Alone you have great value...but together when you share your special qualities and talents, you are increasing your value as a whole. These ‘gifts’ when shared help the class be better together. Sharing yourself and your special strengths with the class is a way to show compassion. In doing so, you are positively impacting your classmates, your teacher, your whole class. I’m going to give each of you an index card/slip of paper. On it, I’d like you to write down one ‘gift’ or special quality, trait or talent that you bring to the class to make it a better place or a stronger group.”

Start with yourself and say the gift that you bring to the class as an example. After students have written down theirs, have each student bring their gifts to the front of the class where they will say them and tape them to the large gift box you’ve drawn on chart paper or poster board. In lieu of this, you can have students drop their slip of paper or

index card into a gift box.

“Remember, there is no one else quite like you. You are valuable and add great value to the class, the school, the community, and the larger world. Don’t be afraid to share your ‘gifts’, your best self. That is the start to being compassionate and the ripple you create reaches farther than you can imagine.”

Call to Action

Phillip Sossou, a recent graduate of Boston Latin High School and art student, used his art talent to show compassion for his fellow classmates. Phillip was bothered by racial tensions that affected his school all year so he took action. Early in the morning on the last day of school he arrived a bit early to hang up 411 hand drawn portraits of his classmates. The process took over 4 months to complete and his goal was to make sure no one in the school went unnoticed.

- **What do you think of what he did?**
- **How did Phillip use his gifts to show compassion?**
- **Why is he an Everyday Hero?**
- **What impact do you think his actions had on his classmates, his school, and the community**



Lesson 2: The Golden Rule

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Students will learn how empathy is related to compassion.➤ Students will distinguish between empathy and sympathy.➤ Students will reflect on and respond to specific questions about pain, hurt, and suffering to make connections to empathy and compassion.➤ Students will respond to questions about hurt and pain through written reflection. • Students will watch and reflect on a video about paying attention to others and relate this to having compassion.➤ Students will identify ways that they can better pay attention to others.➤ Students will engage in an activity with their classmates to find common ground and build connections.➤ Students will practice compassionate	<p><u>CSED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Moral Character➤ Performance Character➤ Intellectual Character <p><u>SEL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Self Awareness➤ Self Management➤ Responsible Decision Making

- listening through paraphrasing.
- Students will define dignity, the Golden Rule, examples of both and how they apply to compassion.
 - Students will identify the ways they want to be treated and focus on the ways they need to extend that to others.

Educator Preparation

- You can either show the chart in this lesson on a smart board or write it on the board.
- Write the following questions on the board:
 - How might someone feel when they are suffering?
 - Is there only one kind of pain/hurt people can feel?
 - How can you recognize when someone is hurting physically or emotionally?
 - Do you always know? Can you always tell?
 - How many different types of pain/hurt have you felt in your lifetime?
 - What or who helps you to overcome your pain?
 - Have you ever related to someone because you have experienced the same pain?
 - What does that feel like, to have someone understand your hurt/pain?

Lesson

“Compassion is the understanding of a problem or suffering of another and acting to solve the problem or alleviate the suffering. What helps us to have compassion for another is when we have empathy and can empathize with them. Empathy is when you can put yourself in someone else’s shoes and be able to understand their perspective, to experience and feel with someone. Is this the same as sympathy?”

“Empathy and empathizing with someone is different from sympathy and sympathizing with someone. Let’s figure out the difference.”

Use the charts below to help students' understand the difference between having sympathy and showing empathy. This can be displayed on a smart board or written on the board.

SYMPATHY IS...

- Understanding distress or suffering of another
- Feeling FOR someone
- Not changing your perspective to see it from another view instead of your own

SYMPATHY SOUNDS LIKE...

- I'm sorry for your pain and suffering.
- Things will get better just hang in there.
- I feel really bad for you. *(Burton, 2015)*

EMPATHY IS...

- Experiencing feelings and emotions of another
- Feeling WITH someone
- Being judgement free
- Actively listening to better understand

EMPATHY SOUNDS LIKE...

- I feel your pain and know how hard it is for you right now.
- Something similar happened to me and I understand how much it hurts.
- Do you want to talk about anything? I'm here to listen to you without judgement.

Let's practice distinguishing between some more responses. I am going to call out a response

and I want you to walk to this side of the room (have a sign labeled sympathy) or the other side of the room (have a sign labeled sympathy) depending on what type of response you think I've called out.

Examples to read:

Sympathy:

- Wow, that sucks.
- Yea, but...
- Well, at least...
- Try to fix the situation immediately.
- Try to distract the person by talking about something else.
- Make a joke.
- Oh, it will be okay.
- Look on the bright side.

Empathy:

- Wow, that sounds really awful.
- I'm here to listen.
- I don't even know what to say right now.
- I remember when something like that happened to me.
- That must have been really difficult to share.
- I can tell you feel...
- I'm really glad you told me.
- Offer a tissue, glass of water, or just to sit quietly with them.

“In order to really make a difference in someone’s life we need more than just feeling sympathy for a person when they are feeling hurt, angry or sad. We need to go beyond sympathy. This is where empathy comes in. Empathy can be the start of having compassion for someone.”

“Have you ever heard of the Golden Rule?”

“Merriam Webster dictionary defines the Golden Rule as a general rule for how to behave that says that you should treat people the way you would like other people to treat you. In other words, give out to others what you would want to receive if the roles were reversed.”

“We can apply this rule to almost every interaction we have with people. The Golden Rule carries a message that all cultures, religions, ethnicities, and genders can appreciate. This rule reminds us to think before we act or speak and ask ourselves: ‘How would I react if this was being done/said to me?’”

“Let’s remind ourselves of some of the ways we can immediately start practicing treating others with dignity and practice the Golden Rule. Here’s a few ideas:

- **Get to know someone first before you make judgements.**
- **Use self-control to THINK about how you should react before acting or responding.**
- **Put yourself in the other person’s shoes-having empathy.**
- **Become curious to learn about how other people live and what’s important to them, even if it’s different from you.**
- **Understand that many cultures have different expectations when it comes to relationships, communicating with each other, style of dress, food and even religious beliefs- and that’s OK.**
- **Remember that different doesn’t mean bad or worse- different just means different.**
- **Be a leader and show others how to be kind and treat others with respect.**
- **Self-regulate, or control your anger and other emotions, so you can look at situations clearly and interact with others in a positive way.**
- **Appreciate and treat every living being with care.”**

“What else could we add to this list? Let’s brainstorm some more ideas.”

Allow for some responses and add these to a list on the board.

“Can you think of a time you treated someone badly because of differences....because they look, speak, dress, or act differently than you? If you could go back to that moment how would you change your actions to reflect dignity and respect for the other person?”

“Has anyone ever treated you in a way that did not show respect and dignity? How did it make you feel?”

“Do you follow The Golden Rule? Give an example of a situation when you followed the Golden Rule and treated someone different from you with dignity and respect. How did it make you feel?”

“Make a list in your notebook of all the ways you want to be treated by others. Try to

name as many things as you can. Then go back and put a check mark next to each thing on your list that you extend to others. Here's an example to help get you started."

Write the following on the board as an example:

'How I Like to Be Treated'

I expect people to treat me with respect, even if we disagree on something.

I like when people are kind to me when I am feeling upset.

I think it's nice when people say thank you, you're welcome, and please.

I enjoy meeting new friends with different interests so I can try new things.

"Remember the Golden Rule says we should treat others the way we want to be treated. So everything on your list should have a check mark by it. If it doesn't, it's never too late to change your behaviors. Focus on the things that you didn't check off and start doing these things for others. This is a great place to start in changing your actions and to start being a more respectful and compassionate person. And let the Golden Rule be one of your affirmations. Take a page of your journal and write it in big bold letters. Decorate it like it's in bright lights making it stand out and drive your behaviors, choices, and responses."

Call to Action

Malala Yousafzai is so famous that people usually only refer to her by her first name: Malala. Living in Pakistan with her family, Malala attended a school her father ran. He was known for being a huge supporter of education.

In Pakistan, education is not like in America. Pakistan has the second highest number of kids out of school in the entire world. In 2009 when The Taliban, a terrorist group in Pakistan, took control of Malala's small town, they forced the schools to close. They would not even allow television or music and women were forced to stay in the house."

"Malala was very brave and stood up for her right to an education and eventually The Taliban voted to kill her. Luckily, Malala survived the vicious attack and was able to share her story with the world after being in the hospital for over three months!

In 2014 Malala won the Nobel Peace Prize which is not only a very respected award, but it comes with a \$1 Million dollar prize. Malala donated every single penny of this money to help finance a new school for girls in Pakistan.

- What do you think of this story?
- What traits of the Choose Love Formula did Malala demonstrate?
- How does she inspire you?



Lesson 3:

Our Compassion Muscle

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Create a compassion pose➤ Describe the benefits of practicing a compassion pose➤ Identify a compassionate act and highlight the ripple effect➤ Define the compassion muscle➤ Discuss the power and responsibility that comes with personal choices and responses.➤ Engage in compassionate responses based on real life scenarios➤ Reflect on compassionate responses to real life scenarios➤ Reflect on the power of personal words and connect to the ripple effect	<p><u>CSED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Moral Character➤ Performance Character➤ Intellectual Character <p><u>SEL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Self Awareness➤ Self Management➤ Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

- Create your own Compassion Pose. As a reference, social psychologist Amy Cuddy's TED talk about how your body language shapes who you are. This video is about 20 minutes in length. You

can watch the whole thing yourself and cue parts you may wish to show the class. https://youtu.be/Ks-_Mh1QhMc

- A Compassion Pose is similar to a Courage Pose in that you are shaping your body (using nonverbal body language) to express yourself and your emotions in an intentional way. In this case, the intention is to embody compassion and align your body to express compassionate energy.
- Be ready to break students into small groups.
- Make a couple copies of the scenarios and cut apart. You will be giving a scenario slip to each group. Some groups may have the same scenario depending on the number of groups. You may also create or have students create alternative scenarios that address common situations they may face or have faced.

Lesson

“One way to strengthen your compassion is to practice Compassion Poses. A Compassion Pose is similar to a Courage Pose. You are shaping your body in a way to express yourself and your emotions in an intentional way. In this case the intention is to embody compassion. Your Compassion Pose is a way of sitting or standing that increases your feelings of empathy, connection, kindness, and openness. Posing in this way changes your body chemistry. That change helps your brain and body move toward compassion.”

You may choose to have students watch some or all of the Amy Cuddy TED Talk video to further explain body poses and how your body language shapes who you are. You may have shown this to students during the Courage Unit, but it may be good to show as a refresher.

“Do you want to see my Compassion Pose?” Show students what your pose looks like.

“Everyone take a minute to find a sitting or standing pose that helps you feel compassionate, open, connected, and happy. Typically, you might spread your arms out wide, open your hands, or place your hands over your heart. Just as the Courage Pose made you feel brave, strong, and confident, the Compassion Pose should make you feel happy, peaceful, loving, connected, and compassionate. Try out a few different positions before deciding which one feels best to you. Make sure you can hold your pose for at least one minute without getting hurt or tired. It is also helpful to say a positive compassion affirmation to yourself as you stand in this pose. Something like, ‘I am happy

and full of compassion.’, ‘I can connect with others in positive ways.’”

“Let’s take our compassion mindset and focus on how we can help others create their own compassion mindset. Watch the bowl as I drop this stone into the water (or hit the line of dominos).”

At the start of the lesson you can do a visual display dropping a small stone in a bowl of water or knocking over dominoes to show how one action has a ripple effect and great impact.

“What does it mean when someone talks about ‘the ripple effect’? Allow for responses.

“When you throw a rock into the water that rock, no matter how small, no matter how hard or far it’s thrown, creates much larger ripples that spread out and reach much farther than the small area where the rock first splashed.”

"The ripples are the impact that the rock has on the water. What starts as perhaps a small impact, really becomes something much bigger, the ripples show us that. It’s the same with our words and actions. No matter how insignificant, small and simple they seem, their impact is much greater, reaching far more people than we realize."

Ask students to answer the following questions in their journals or in a discussion format:

- How did the video make you feel?
- What was the message of the video?
- Describe the ripple effect in your own words.
- What’s the small stone that you can cast into the waters.....what is one small thing you can do today to cause a ripple effect?
- What’s a bigger thing you can do?
- How might that impact others?
- How will that affect you?

“Draw a circle in the middle of your paper. In it write down one small, simple act of compassion that you can do today. Now, pretend this is the stone you’ve cast into the water. What ripples will this produce? What positive impact might your compassionate act have on yourself, others, and the world around you. Draw rings around your original circle

and write down what these ripples, these positive effects might be that you generated.”

You may choose to do your own example for students. Time permitting, you may wish to invite students to share some of their compassionate actions and ripple effects.

“By completing small acts of compassion, you’re strengthening your compassion muscle. I like to think that we have a compassion muscle too. This muscle is just like the other muscles in that you have to use it to define and strengthen it. When we practice compassion daily, we build and strengthen our compassion muscle and positively impact our lives in many ways. A defined compassion muscle strengthens our character, it builds connections with others, it increases our positive, happy, and loving feelings and thoughts, it builds a positive attitude, and it gives meaning and purpose to our lives.”

“In any situation, there are always many choices we can make on how we handle things. One of the most important things we have learned in this program is that we can’t always choose what happens to us, but we can always choose how we respond. And we can always find a way to respond in a compassionate and loving manner. We can choose the compassionate response.”

“We have a great deal of power in having this choice. When we choose the compassionate response, we are making a choice that feels good, but it’s also the right choice and the smart choice. And as we have said before, your choice to respond and act with compassion impacts more than just the situation you’re in or the people involved right then and there. Your compassionate choice and response starts this ripple. And there is no telling how far and wide this ripple of compassion and kindness may spread and how it may alter the course of your or someone else’s day or even life.”

“It isn’t always easy to show compassion. It means you can’t just quickly react to a situation. You have to stop and think before you act. You have to leave the lizard, to nudge the numbat and hug your human brain. You have to think of how things may play out if you respond in different ways. Envision the ripple effect and think about the kind of ripple that you are starting by the way you choose to respond.”

“Remember it takes practice and work to build that compassion muscle. Today we are going to work on it. You will be divided into small groups. Each of you will be given a slip of paper with a scenario. You will work together to role play the scenarios. Act out a way each person can respond in a positive, compassionate way.”

Give students time to create and practice their role plays/skits. Then time permitting, have each group share their scenarios and compassionate responses with the larger class. Ask for students to share other compassionate ways in which they could respond to the scenarios acted out. Allow time for students to reflect on this experience in their journal.

Scenarios:

You and your best friend since kindergarten decide that you both want to try out for the cheerleading team when you get to middle school. Only problem is you made the team and your friend is upset because she didn't. **How should you respond?**

Some friends at school are going back and forth making nasty, hurtful comments on social media. There is one person they are targeting the most. You don't like the way this person is being treated? **How should you respond?**

There is a new teacher at school and he looks different from the others because he wears a turban on his head. You learn that Mr. Patel is from a country called India and the turban is part of his religion. Many of your peers begin to make fun of him behind his back and some are even making fun of him to his face. This makes you feel uncomfortable and you have empathy for the teacher. **How should you respond?**

You just got your very first paid job babysitting your neighbor's children. One of the kids confides in you that their parents are getting a divorce. The child seems upset, afraid and anxious about what the future may hold. **How should you respond?**

You used to be really good friends with this one kid. But now you don't really hang out anymore. You've heard rumors that they are having a hard time right now with problems at home and school. One day you are with your friends when you notice this person and they seem really down and not like the way you remember them being? **How should you respond?**

You sit with a bunch of the cool, popular kids at lunch. You've noticed that whenever someone outside the group asks to sit down at the table, they say no. You've also noticed that there are some kids sitting alone at lunch. **How should you respond?**

“Words and actions are really powerful and we must choose and use them carefully. There is another Arabian proverb that gives some good advice to all. It says, ‘The words of the tongue have 3 gatekeepers: Is it True? Is it Kind? Is it Necessary?’ I think these are three very important questions to ask yourself when you are choosing your words, both written and spoken. Write that down in your journal: Is it True? Is it Kind? Is it Necessary? Let this be your guide.”

“To finish today’s lesson, I’d like for you to think of the encouraging, inspiring, and compassionate words you’d like to share with others and the world. You may not be famous....but your words can inspire and have a great impact on others. What do you want your message to be? What power will your words have?”

Call to Action

Captain Sully is an Everyday Hero because he showed courage in a very stressful and dangerous situation. He is a pilot and the aircraft he was flying malfunctioned from two geese flying into the engines. The plane was going down. Captain Sully was very brave and focused on a way to rescue the people onboard. He decided the safest way to land was on top of the Hudson River in New York City. The airplane glided down toward the river and eventually skidded across the surface. Every single person was rescued and survived all because of Captain Sully’s courage and his concern for the passengers on board.

- **What do you think makes Captain Sully an Everyday Hero?**
- **Could you have done what he did?**
- **What did it take for him to achieve this feat?**



Lesson 4: Caring for Ourselves

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Define self compassion➤ Analyze the importance of self compassion➤ Identify people to talk to when compassion is needed➤ Brainstorm ways to show self-compassion and self-care➤ Create a personal 'Top 10 Self-Care' lists.➤ Generate personal affirmations to show self compassion and self care	<p><u>CSED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Moral Character➤ Performance Character➤ Intellectual Character <p><u>SEL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Self Awareness➤ Self Management➤ Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

- There is no preparation for this lesson today.

Lesson

“Let’s begin by taking a Mindful Minute. Find a comfortable position to sit. Close your eyes and focus your attention for one minute on a time when you felt loved.”

“Often we find it easier to show compassion and love to others, but find it harder to do so

with ourselves. One can only truly have compassion for another if they first have compassion for themselves. It's easy sometimes for us to judge ourselves. However, we all do the best we know how, and that's why it's important for us to show patience and kindness to ourselves. It's also important that we always try to learn from our mistakes and improve what we know, how we act, and the choices we make."

"Self-compassion means showing compassion to yourself, especially when you are down, when you have failed, when you are feeling like you don't measure up to those around you, or when you are suffering in some way. It means treating yourself with kindness. It means practicing self-love, or caring about your own well-being and happiness.

"Some might think that having self-compassion or self-love is selfish, but it's very hard to show love and compassion for others without first showing the same to ourselves. Having self-compassion and self-love helps us push through and overcome negative emotions and difficult situations to be confident and to be able to be our best self."

Have students find a partner or have them pre-assigned.

"Turn to a partner, share a time when you found it difficult to be compassionate toward yourself. Maybe you caught yourself using negative self-talk, or chose to not take a self-care break when you needed one. Perhaps it was a time when you failed or struggled, or did something you weren't proud of. Take a few minutes to both share these experiences."

"It feels good to express your feelings and connect with others in this way. This is a great way to practice self-compassion. In your journals, quickly write down at least 3 people that you can turn to when you need to talk and need encouragement and compassion. Who do you feel comfortable talking to? Who will listen and be empathetic and compassionate to you?"

As a class, brainstorm a list of at least 20 ways to show self-compassion or self-care. Examples may include: Deep Breathing, Mindful Minutes, Exercising, Eating healthy, Journaling, Positive self-talk like Affirmations and Compliments, Rewarding yourself for accomplishments big and small, Talking to a trusted friend or adult, Listening to upbeat/feel good music, Reading something inspirational, Laughing, Smiling, etc.

After you have brainstormed at least 20 ways to show self-care, have students write down

the ones that resonate with them the most.

“Out of the list we’ve created, think of those that you think would work for you. Which would you feel comfortable doing? Which do you think would be the most helpful to you?”

In your journals make your own Top 10 Self-Care List. Use the list generated in addition to other things perhaps not mentioned. You may include things that you already do, but try to also add several new ideas. You are free to make your list longer, but at least have 10 things listed. Remember to actually do these things. Keep a copy of this list handy so that you can refer to it when you need it and need a way to give yourself care, concern, and love.”

“One way to show self-care is to use affirmations for ourselves. Affirmations, as we know, are positive statements that help us turn negative self talk into positive self-talk.”

“We’ve talked about the power of words and we have to remember this also applies to the words we use with ourselves. Instead of criticizing and putting ourselves down, we have to affirm and encourage ourselves with our words.”

“‘I am’ is a powerful statement, and we use it everyday. Affirmations help us use ‘I am’ statements that inspire us, help us feel good about ourselves, and show ourselves compassion. If we choose our words wisely and carefully, we use ‘I am’ messages that help us believe in ourselves, promote our success, and help us achieve our goals. Here are some examples of some positive ‘I am’ statements: ‘I am powerful.’, ‘I am smart.’, ‘I am important.’, ‘I am compassionate’. We are going to practice using affirmations and see how they effect our mindset and attitude. Let’s start by writing down an affirmation.....a specific, positive statement to empower you and overcome negative self-talk.....you can use an ‘I am’ statement or some other affirming message.”

Instruct students to write one affirmation on a piece of paper. Collect the papers, mix them up, and redistribute them to the students. Have students stand in a courage or compassion pose and read the statement on the paper they received using a strong, clear, assertive voice. Remind them of how powerful it can be when your words, tone, and body language align. If students are hesitant or shy, remind them it is okay and that it takes practice. All of these skills can feel awkward when you first try them. Have students write a couple of their favorite affirmations from this activity in their journals. Debrief the

activity using the following questions: How do you feel reading the affirmations? Does an affirmation empower you or motivate you? Do affirmations make you feel good about yourself? What thoughts did you have during this activity? How can you use affirmations in your life? How will using affirmations benefit you?

“This week, notice when you use ‘I am’ statements, and especially notice any ‘I am’ statements you repeat to yourself frequently. If you notice anything negative about these statements, be sure to change them to positive statements to inspire and empower you and practice self-compassion. Try to start or end the day with a motivating ‘I am’ statement. The more frequently they are used, the more naturally you will use them and the more empowered you will be.”

Call to Action

Our next Everyday Hero is JT Lewis. JT is the big brother of Jesse Lewis whose life was taken from us on 12-14-12 in a senseless act of violence. Just like his mother Scarlett, who founded the Jesse Lewis Choose Love Movement to teach others about the importance of forgiveness, compassion, courage, and gratitude through the Choose Love Program, JT also decided to step outside of his own pain and show compassion to others.

There was a period of time when JT did not want to attend school, see his friends, or even talk to anyone. He felt hopeless, angry, and sad. But with some help he found courage to face his fears and anger by practicing forgiveness and kindness. JT is an Everyday Hero because he had the courage to step outside of his own pain. He showed empathy towards others and found a purpose and a way to get through his pain and sadness by showing compassion to others.

After his little brother was killed many survivors from the Rwandan genocide reached out to JT via Skype to not only share their experiences with pain, but more importantly to share their love. Rwanda is a country in Africa that suffered a devastating civil war which resulted in the death of almost 1,000,000 people in only 100 days. Many of the children who lost their entire families wanted to show support to JT by experiencing the pain with him.

They followed the same formula for choosing love that you are learning: **Courage + Gratitude + Forgiveness + Compassion in Action = Choosing Love.** They began with gratitude for being alive, then chose to forgive those who had murdered their parents,

understanding that they might go down the same path of anger and destruction as the perpetrators if they didn't. Then had the courage to step outside their own pain to show compassion and help others. They found in doing this, peace and personal healing.

In response, JT founded his own charity called Newtown Helps Rwanda. So far, JT has fundraised enough money to pay for two orphan genocide survivors from Rwanda to attend university. He has helped to build self-sustaining fish ponds for former children soldiers in Uganda. And he has helped countless children in America. He recently won a Teen Choice Award for his work. He vows to continue his efforts! JT is an incredible example of how powerful helping others can be for us. When we help others, we help ourselves.

- What do you think about this story?
- How does it make you feel?
- How do you think showing compassion to others helped JT?
- How does this inspire you?



Lesson 5: We Can Change the World

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Identify personal ways to change the world.➤ Create personal scripts for a 'How to Change the World' video➤ Reflect on learning targets through the compassion unit and program	<p><u>CSED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Moral Character➤ Performance Character➤ Intellectual Character <p><u>SEL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Self Awareness➤ Self Management➤ Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

- Prepare the following link from Kid President: <https://youtu.be/4z7gDsSKUmU>

Lesson

“We have been talking about the different ways that as an individual or as part of a group you may practice compassion, make a difference in the lives of others, and make this world a better place. You may think that your actions won’t really make a difference or matter unless you are someone famous or powerful....but your actions matter. Sometimes people think that little acts won’t make much difference. They feel that they must do something big to make a difference, so they don’t bother doing anything.”

“We’ve talked about the ripple effect of kind and compassionate acts. Remember that your

little actions create a ripple effect that creates an even larger impact, spreading compassion and love far and wide. And collectively, by combining your compassionate efforts, you can truly change the world. You can make little changes and big changes.....either way, your efforts truly matter. You have more power than you think, more influence than you realize.....your choices and actions, no matter how big or small, make a profound difference!"

"Let's watch a quick video by Robby Novak, otherwise known as 'Kid President'. We've watched one of his videos before. Even though Robby is only 13, he has created some videos that have some powerful, positive, encouraging words for people of all ages. His videos have been viewed millions of times by so many individuals all over the world! They have made quite an impact!"

"Did you know that Robby has a condition called Osteogenesis Imperfecta Disease? This is a rare brittle bone disease that basically means his bones break very easily. As of 2013, he had broken more than 70 bones and had 13 surgeries. He's had a lot of physical challenges and he has also experienced a lot of bullying. But Robby stays positive and is even able to do these YouTube videos to inspire others. Despite the hardships he has faced, he has a great attitude, lives a life with great purpose, and is full of gratitude. Let's watch his video called, 'How to Change the World'. It will give you a lot to think about, will inspire you, and will make you laugh a little, too! He has a great voice and ideas to share with the world and so do you! Let's watch and hear his ideas for change and positive impact!"

Have students view the Kid President video at the following link:

<https://youtu.be/4z7gDsSKUmU>

After watching the video, have students reflect on his ideas and message. Possible discussion questions could include:

- How does this video relate to Compassion in Action and Choosing Love?
- What was Kid President's message?
- Did you agree with what he has to say? Why?
- What ideas did you like most and why? Are these things easy or hard to do?
- How do you think doing some of these things would affect you and those around you?

“In your journals, jot down a few ideas of Kid President’s that are things you will start doing today! Then, pretend you are Kid President (or give yourself another name), what would your video look like? What would your list look like? Write down your list/ ideas for how to change the world. Remember, they can be little and/or big things. How would you spread compassion and love to make the world a better place? Now, create a short script for the video you would create using some of the things you just jotted down. Make it a call to action, make it funny, make it catchy, make it you!”

Have students share some of their ideas and video scripts in partners, small groups or as a class. As an extension, students could use phones or tablets to actually record and make their own videos. This could be a class project or extra credit project. Some may even be played/shown on the school announcements.

“Next class is our final Choose Love lesson for the year. We have learned quite a lot through this unit on Compassion. Let’s reflect on some of our new knowledge with one another. I have a ball/bean bag that we are going to toss around. When you have the ball/bean bag you will share something that you’ve learned in the Compassion Unit. I’ve written some questions on the board to help in sharing. After you have shared, you toss it to someone else who will share. You may get the ball/object more than once so be prepared to answer some of these questions on the board. I will begin.”

***A COVID accommodation for this could be pulling names out of a jar or playing “popcorn” and popping out names for students to jump in and participate.**

Write the following sentences on the board:

- What is something you learned that you think will have the most positive impact on your life?
- What is the most important thing you learned?
- What had the most impact on you?
- What is a skill you learned that you think is very beneficial to you to use?
- What is something that really stands out in your mind and heart?

Try to play long enough so that everyone has had a chance to respond/share.

“Now I’d like you to write down some of the things that you’ve learned from this unit in your journals. Think of what things have impacted you the most...what information and skills will be the most helpful to you moving forward? Think of some things that your

classmates just shared that stood out to you.”

Allow a few minutes for students to write in their journals.

Call to Action

Fill a glass halfway with water. Use salt or sugar or sand and a spoon to swirl around the mixture. This is an analogy for our minds when we are stressed, angry, upset, anxious or scared.....when our minds are full of racing thoughts and feelings, particularly negative or challenging ones.

It’s important to remember a few things..... first, we need to think about what we’re thinking about. Second, we need to keep our thoughts positive. Last, we need to calm ourselves when we are overwhelmed by our thoughts and feelings. By taking deep breaths and focusing on or imagining the salt/sugar/sand settling, we can settle ourselves, calming our minds, hearts and bodies.

We also need to remember to practice self care to maintain the calm water in our minds.

Next time you’re feeling stressed, angry, upset, anxious or scared, think of your brain swirling around like the water in the glass and focus on how to settle it down to regain your personal power.



Lesson 6: Choose Love Commitment

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Generate choose love commitment statements➤ Synthesize information learned throughout the course of the unit.➤ Create a culminating project depicting the major lessons gleaned from the Choose Love for Schools Program.	<p><u>CSED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Moral Character➤ Performance Character➤ Intellectual Character <p><u>SEL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Self Awareness➤ Self Management➤ Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

- Draft your own commitment statement to choosing love to share with students.
 - Copy the following on the board to help inspire the students' commitment statements:
 - I commit to choosing love because...
- I believe... I value... I want... I think... I feel... I can... I dream... I hope... I know...
- Print out the Choose Love Enrichment Program Certificates and have one completed for each student.

Lesson

“Let’s take a final Mindful Minute to complete the Choose Love Program. Find a comfortable position to sit or stand. Close your eyes and focus your attention on choosing love for one minute.”

“In our final lesson, I’d like you all to use the following prompts to reflect on our Choose Love journey and your personal growth.”

I commit to choosing love because...

I believe...

I value...

I want...

I think...

I feel...

I can...

I dream...

I hope...

I know...

“This year we’ve spent a great deal of time talking about how to grow emotionally and become a better person through our learning around the Choose Love Formula. Think back to our lessons on courage, gratitude, forgiveness and most recently, compassion. What are your takeaways? How would you explain your learning to others who haven’t experienced this program? How has your life changed in small or big ways because of what you know now?”

“Think about a way that you can bottle up all of the knowledge you’ve been given to pass along to someone else. Scarlett is looking for students to use their own voice to explain the benefits of the Choose Love for Schools Program and how it has impacted your life. You can use any type of mode you want. We will be sending these to Scarlett for her to share with others around the world. The sky’s the limit. As Jesse said, ‘Have a lot of fun!’”

Challenge your students to find some outlet (lean towards digital platform) noting what their takeaways are from the year long program to be turned into Scarlett Lewis.

Some examples could be a short video, a mural or collage, a dream board, a letter or even a song (a melody is provided on the Choose Love for Schools website under resources). These culminating activities can be presented to the class as well as with the Choose Love For Schools Program!

Call To Action

Find a piece of paper in your journals and draw a bunch of small boxes like it's a comic strip. Fill each little box and fill it well.

Let these boxes represent your life...how can you make it amazing? What does an amazing life look like to you? How can you show compassion and love to yourself and others? How can you learn and grow? What goals do you have? What have you and will you achieve? What life will you create and shape? Write it all down with words, sentences, pictures, comics, and the colors that show this amazing life that is yours.



Grade 6 | [COMPASSION IN ACTION](#) | Extension Lessons

EXTENSION LESSON 1:

The Choose Love Constitution

Educator Prep

- Reference the Choose Love Constitution created at the beginning of the Choose Love For Schools™ course and consider how it has been working for the students and class.

Activity

“Let’s take another Mindful Minute to get started. This helps us clear our mind and gain greater focus and clarity. Find a comfortable position to sit. Close your eyes and focus your attention on this classroom for one minute.”

“Today we are going to revisit the Choose Love Constitution to reflect on how it’s been working for our class.” Ask students the following questions to prompt a dialogue on how their Choose Love Constitution has been working and what updates they want to make:

- What has been working well?
- What could we add regarding compassion?
- How has the constitution benefited you individually?
- How has the constitution benefited us as a whole class?
- Where does it need to be adjusted to better fit this classroom’s culture?
- When has it been the most difficult to abide by?

“I’d like you to take a minute to write down in your journals what you feel grateful for about this class.” Allow for students to share if desired.

“Next I’d like you to think of someone in your life who is a compassionate role model. Who shows compassion to you and others on a daily basis. Write about this person in your

journal. What makes them special? How do they show compassion? How did they make the world a better place? What impact do they have on your life? How do they inspire you? What traits do they possess that you appreciate?"

Afterwards, students can break into small groups and share their journal writings and role models.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 2:

Sharing “Gifts”

Educator Preparation

- Prepare to identify examples of courageous behavior that are relevant to the students in your class.
- Have index cards or slips of paper for each student.
- Draw a picture of a gift box on a large piece of chart paper or poster board. Students will tape their ‘gift’ to the gift box as part of the activity. You could also choose to have a gift box where students drop their index card or slip of paper.

Activity

“Today we are going to do a self-esteem building and team building exercise to set the tone for the rest of this unit. Everyone in this class is valuable and brings special gifts to the class. Alone you have great value, but together when you share your special qualities and talents, you are increasing your value as a whole. These ‘gifts’ when shared help the class be better together.

Sharing yourself and your special strengths with the class is a way to show compassion. In doing so, you are positively impacting your classmates, your teacher, your whole class. I’m going to give each of you an index card/slip of paper. On it, I’d like you to write down one ‘gift’ or special quality, trait or talent that you bring to the class to make it a better place or a stronger group.”

Start with yourself and say the gift that you bring to the class as an example. After students have written down theirs, have each student bring their gifts to the front of the class where they will say them and tape them to the large gift box you’ve drawn on chart paper or poster board.

In lieu of this, you can have students drop their slip of paper or index card into a gift box.

“Remember, there is no one else quite like you. You are valuable and add great value to the class, the school, the community, and the larger world. Don’t be afraid to share your

'gifts', your best self. That is the start to being compassionate and the ripple you create reaches farther than you can imagine."

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 3:

Compassion Quotes

Educator Prep

Print copies of/ distribute the Compassion Quotes digital worksheet.

Activity

“Today I want to share what some famous people had to say about compassion. I’m going to pass around a sheet that has various quotes on compassion. Let’s get some volunteers to read each one aloud. As each quote is read, I want you to stomp your feet twice (or clap/snap fingers) if you agree with it.”

Distribute the Quotes on Compassion worksheet to all. Call on volunteers to read each one aloud.

“For the next few minutes, I want you to reflect on these quotes in your journals. What stands out to you? What is something that you learned about compassion from them? Which quote is your favorite? Write it in your journal and reflect on the quote and why it is your favorite. React and respond to it.”

Time permitting, you can have students break into partners or small groups and share some of their favorite quotes and reflections. You can even allow students to use their phones to find another quote on compassion to share with the larger group. This can be an in class activity or can be an out of class assignment or extra credit opportunity where they find a different quote and give a written reaction or response to it.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 4:

Common Ground

Educator Preparation

Have a timer on hand for the activity.

Activity

“Today we are going to do a little activity to help us get better connected with others. We can have empathy for and show compassion to anyone, even complete strangers and people that we are completely different from. But when we can find common ground, it is easier to have empathy and compassion.

“Finding common ground creates and strengthens connections, and then empathy and compassion further strengthen those connections.

“In this activity, we are going to practice finding common ground with our classmates. This next activity will require us to move about the room. This activity will help us find connections with one another that we may not even know exist!

“Start with the person next to you and strike up a conversation by telling them your favorite things. This can be things, places, activities, people, etc. Try to name as many things as you can until you find one thing you have in common before the timer goes off. If you can find more than one thing in common that’s even better. I bet you will be surprised at the things that you have in common with others that you never knew!

“I will set the timer and after the beep, write down your partner’s name and your common ground and connections. Then, switch to the next classmate and when the timer starts you will repeat the same activity. Let’s find some common ground....let’s get connected!!”

You can set the timer for however long based on time allotment. It is recommended to do 30 seconds per meet and greet so that each student can visit everyone in the class or as many students as possible. You can participate in this activity or walk around the room offering suggestions to get the conversation going if needed.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 5:

Compassion Muscle

Educator Preparation

Students will be using their Journals.

Activity

“We know that we have a lot of muscles in our body. Right now, let’s try to use all of the muscles in your body. Let’s make all of your muscles tense. Tighten up those legs and show those muscles in your arms! Keep your muscles tense and flexed for the next 20 seconds. OK. Now, relax. Phew!!”

“In order to make our muscles more defined and stronger, we have to work them out as much as possible...which involves action and practice. I like to think that we have a compassion muscle too. This muscle is just like the other muscles in that you have to use it to define and strengthen it.

“When we practice compassion daily, we build and strengthen our compassion muscle and positively impact our lives in many ways. A defined compassion muscle strengthens our character, it builds connections with others, it increases our positive, happy, and loving feelings and thoughts, it builds a positive attitude, and it gives meaning and purpose to our lives.

“The more we use our compassion muscle the bigger this muscle gets. But remember, in this unit, we are talking about compassion in action. This means we must go beyond just thinking and feeling in a compassionate way. We need to take action if we really want to work this muscle. We can show compassion, kindness, and concern in the way we treat and interact with others.

“In your journals, make a list of all the ways your body gets exercise each day. Then, count up how many different exercises and for every form of exercise, write down an act of compassion and kindness that you can do to work that compassion muscle.” “Let’s share and compare. Turn to your neighbor and share your lists. What are the similarities? What are the differences? If you gain some new ideas, add them to your lists.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 6:

Power of Our Words

Educator Prep

Preview and cue the following video: <https://youtu.be/Xzg1htttLZs> (can be stopped at 3:20)

Activity

“It is said that the tongue has no bones, but it can break a heart. What does that mean?”

Allow for responses and reflection.

“Today we are going to talk about another power we have....that is the power of our words. We can’t always choose what happens to us, but we can choose how we respond...and we can respond with compassion and love. This speaks about our actions, but also our words.

“Our words can get us into a lot of trouble. Some people when referring to them, have called words a weapon. In what way can words be a weapon?” Allow for responses.

“Here are a couple of quotes about the power of words. I will write them on the board and you can copy them in your journals.”

‘Words are the containers for power, you choose what power they carry.’ - Joyce Meyer

‘Words can inspire. And words can destroy. Choose yours well.’- Robin Sharma

‘Your words become your world.’- Author unknown

‘Kind words can be easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.’- Mother Teresa

“Let me read each one. Clap your hands if you agree with the quote.” Read each quote aloud and allow for students to clap. Then discuss the quotes. Allow for response, reaction, and reflection.

“I am going to show you an inspiring video with the famous professional wrestler and actor John Cena that relates to the power of words, empathy, and compassion.”

Show video:

Reflect and react in a whole class discussion using the following questions as prompts:

- **What do you think of what you saw?**
- **How did it make you feel?**
- **What words did John Cena use that inspired, encouraged, and touched so many?**
- **How was compassion shown to John?**
- **How did he feel? How could you tell how he was feeling?**
- **Why was he moved so much? How was compassion shown? How did words have power and positively impact people?**

“Words are really powerful and we must choose and use them carefully. There is another Arabian proverb that gives some good advice to all. It says,

‘The words of the tongue have 3 gatekeepers: Is it True? Is it Kind? Is it Necessary?’

I think these are three very important questions to ask yourself when you are choosing your words, both written and spoken. Write that down in your journal: Is it True? Is it Kind? Is it Necessary? Let this be your guide.

“To finish today’s lesson, I’d like for you to think of the encouraging, inspiring, and compassionate words you’d like to share with others and the world. You may not be as famous as John Cena....but your words can inspire and have a great impact on others. What do you want your message to be? What power will your words have?”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 7:

Pay Attention

Educator Preparation

Cue the following video: <https://youtu.be/A4a66aFaIME>

Activity

“Let’s get started by taking a Mindful Minute. Find a comfortable position to sit. Close your eyes and focus your attention on a very tiny thing for one minute.”

“Where does compassion come from?”

“We know it comes from having an awareness of the pain and suffering of others. To do so you need to be able to have empathy for others, or the ability to take another person’s perspective and feel the emotions of another. It’s trying to put yourself in their shoes to feel what they feel. But how do we do that?”

“We are going to watch a video that attempts to explain where compassion really comes from, where it starts. Sometimes having and showing compassion seems complicated or difficult, but this video shows us how it starts with a simple action.”

Show the video: <https://youtu.be/A4a66aFaIME>

Discuss the video answering some or all of these questions:

- What were they trying to say?
- What did they mean by paying attention to others?
- Why is paying attention to others important?
- How does paying attention to others help you be empathetic?
- How does it relate to compassion?
- How could you apply this to your life?

These may also be answered in their journals and then responses shared with the larger group.

“Let’s brainstorm a list of ways for us to pay better attention to others.” As a class brainstorm a list of ways to help them pay better attention to others and list them on the board. Have students write these in their journals.

“Today we discussed a very easy but essential way to start having compassion for others which is simply by really paying attention to them. It feels really good when someone pays attention to us and when we feel heard. When we pay attention to others we start to connect with and can better understand them. We become aware of how they feel and their pain, suffering, and sadness. This allows us to begin to have empathy and then compassion for others.

“Today, see if you can start really noticing and paying attention to others and the world around you. Step outside yourself, your perspective, your world. See if this little action makes a difference in how you see, understand, interact and connect with others.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 8:

Dignity and The Golden Rule

Educator Prep

You may choose to write the following list on the board. You will also be reading it aloud to students.

1. Get to know someone first before you make judgements.
2. Use self-control to THINK about how you should react before acting or responding.
3. Put yourself in the other person's shoes-having empathy.
4. Become curious to learn about how other people live and what's important to them, even if it's different from you.
5. Understand that many cultures have different expectations when it comes to relationships, communicating with each other, style of dress, food and even religious beliefs- and that's OK.
6. Remember that different doesn't mean bad or worse- different just means different.
7. Be a leader and show others how to be kind and treat others with respect.
8. Self-regulate, or control your anger and other emotions, so you can look at situations clearly and interact with others in a positive way.
9. Appreciate and treat every living thing with care.

Activity

“There are over 7 billion people on planet earth and not a single one of us is like another... even down to the tiniest atoms and cells in our bodies. Did you know that no two fingerprints are even alike? But, we all share at least one common desire and that is to love and be loved, to be treated with dignity.

“Treating someone with dignity means we are sensitive to their needs, it means doing one's best for them, it means showing them care, it means respecting their individuality and differences, it means acting in a way that supports and promotes them rather than undermining their self-respect. In a nut shell, it means treating everybody like they are a somebody, like they are important and valuable.

“You may have heard of the Golden Rule. Merriam Webster dictionary defines the Golden Rule as a general rule for how to behave that says that you should treat people the way you would like other people to treat you. In other words, give out to others what you

would want to receive if the roles were reversed. We can apply this rule to almost every interaction we have with people.

“The Golden Rule carries a message that all cultures, religions, ethnicities, and genders can appreciate. This rule reminds us to think before we act or speak and ask ourselves: ‘How would I react if this was being done/said to me?’”

“Let’s remind ourselves of some of the ways we can immediately start practicing treating others with dignity and practice the Golden Rule. I jotted down a few ideas.” (read list)

“What else could we add to this list? Let’s brainstorm some more ideas.” Allow for some responses and add these to a list on the board.

“Can you think of a time you treated someone badly because of differences....because they look, speak, dress, or act differently than you? If you could go back to that moment how you would change your actions to reflect dignity and respect for the other person?”

“Has anyone ever treated you in a way that did not show respect and dignity? How did it make you feel?”

“Do you follow The Golden Rule? Give an example of a situation when you followed the Golden Rule and treated someone different from you with dignity and respect. How did it make you feel?”

“Make a list in your notebook of all the ways you want to be treated by others. Try to name as many things as you can. Then go back and put a check mark next to each thing on your list that you extend to others.

“Here’s an example to help get you started.” Write the following on the board as an example:

‘How I Like to Be Treated’ I expect people to treat me with respect, even if we disagree on something. I like when people are kind to me when I am feeling upset. I think it’s nice when people say thank you, you’re welcome, and please. I enjoy meeting new friends with different interests so I can try new things.

“Remember the Golden Rule says we should treat others the way we want to be treated. So everything on your list should have a check mark by it. If it doesn’t, it’s never too late to change your behaviors. Focus on the things that you didn’t check off and start doing these things for others. This is a great place to start in changing your actions and to start

being a more respectful and compassionate person. And let the Golden Rule be one of your affirmations. Take a page of your journal and write it in big bold letters. Decorate it like it's in bright lights making it stand out and drive your behaviors, choices, and responses."

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 9:

Being Kind to Me From A to Z

Educator Prep

Prepare/distribute “Being Kind to Me” digital worksheet.

Activity

“Today let’s practice some more self compassion by showing ourselves a little kindness. For some reason, sometimes it’s easier to be kind to a total stranger than it is to be kind to ourselves. We often get down on ourselves and become overly critical, spending more time pointing out our faults instead of our strengths. If you are constantly putting yourself down, how do you think this will affect how you feel about yourself? Will it be more difficult to show compassion to others if you are feeling this way? How can you show kindness to others if you can’t show kindness to yourself?”

“Remember, we have to show compassion to ourselves first. This builds our self-esteem and creates positive feelings in ourselves that build compassion muscles. When we feel good about ourselves, we want to share those positive vibes with others.....it makes it easier to reach out and connect with others in healthy, meaningful, and positive ways.”

“Let’s build ourselves up today and create some of those positive vibes in ourselves. On the worksheet, start with the letter A and list an adjective or noun to describe you or highlight a positive trait about yourself. Write down something you like about yourself that corresponds with each letter of the alphabet. Show yourself a little kindness and compassion. See what letter you can get up to using all positive words to describe yourself. Here are some examples to get started.”

A - Adventurous B - Brave C - Caring D - Daydreamer E - Empathetic

“See if you can make it all the way to the letter Z! Write as many as you can in your journals.” Time permitting you can have students share a few of their letter responses.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

EXTENSION LESSON 10 :

Mind In A Jar & Compassion Breath

Educator Prep

Preview and cue the following video, 'Mind In a Jar': <https://youtu.be/QNmMH6tqiMc>

Activity

“It’s really hard to practice compassion when we are stressed, upset, or angry. When our feelings are out of control, it’s hard to feel good about ourselves and connect with others in kind, caring, compassionate ways. As we talked about before, when we feel like this, we need to do something to nudge the numbat to leave the lizard and hug the human. We know we need to keep our thoughts positive and inspiring because our thoughts can affect our feelings and then these thoughts and feelings affect our behaviors.

“We are going to watch a brief video that talks a little bit more about our minds, thoughts, and feelings.”

Show the following video: <https://youtu.be/QNmMH6tqiMc>

“This video used a glass of water with swirling sand as an analogy for our minds when we are stressed, angry, upset, anxious or scared....when our minds are full of racing thoughts and feelings, particularly negative or challenging ones. It’s important to remember a few things..... first, we need to think about what we’re thinking about.

“Second, we need to keep our thoughts positive. Last, we need to calm ourselves when we are overwhelmed by our thoughts and feelings. This video showed a simple way to calm ourselves. By taking deep breaths and focusing on or imagining the sand settling, we can settle ourselves, calming our minds, hearts and bodies. This is a mindfulness exercise.”

“We’ve learned a lot of mindfulness activities. One that we’ve done a lot is diaphragmatic, or deep belly breathing. Today we are going to learn a Compassion Breath. Before we learn and take a Compassion Breath, let’s set an intention. Remember, an intention is a purpose or a reason for doing something. It can also be a statement about how you hope to participate in something. Our intention for today is: ‘May my heart be open to show

compassion to myself and others.’ Say that quietly to yourself. I’ll repeat it one more time: ‘May my heart be open to show compassion to myself and others.’

“Now let’s learn a Compassion Breath. Place one hand on your heart and one hand on your belly. Close your eyes. Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose...and slowly breathe out through your mouth. When you breathe in, feel your belly rise and imagine your heart growing bigger as it fills with love and compassion. As you breathe in, think to yourself, ‘May my heart be open to show compassion to myself and others.’ Continue breathing slowly and deeply, in through your nose and out through your mouth.”

“As we keep breathing, let’s relax our bodies. Inhale, and bring your attention to the top of your head. Place your hands on the top of your head. Relax your head and neck and say to yourself, ‘May my mind be calm and relaxed so that I can show compassion to myself and others’. Place both hands on your heart and say, ‘May my heart be open to practicing compassion.’ Now, relax your legs and feet and say, ‘May my feet carry me safely, and may I bring compassion wherever I go.’ Finally, relax your whole body and say to yourself, ‘ May I bring compassion to the whole world.’”

“Take one more slow, deep breath and picture yourself spreading kindness and compassion to yourself and others. Then open your eyes. You should be feeling more relaxed. Are your mind and heart feeling calmer and more at ease? Are you feeling less stressed and more compassion?”

“Compassion Breaths are a great mindfulness tool to settle that mind of ours that has thoughts and feelings swirling about like a tornado. Breathing in this way is a way to show self compassion. It helps us relax and de-stress and move away from negative thoughts and feelings and focus on compassion. We can use Compassion Breaths to nudge the numbat to leave the lizard and hug the human brain which allows us to better act, respond, and interact with others.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness, Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 11 :

The Willow Tree

Educator Prep

- Prepare/distribute The Willow Tree poem via digital worksheet.
- Preview/prepare for discussion about historic figures/celebrities, etc. who have demonstrated compassion.
- Write the following poem format on the board or you may choose a different format or allow students to create poems freely.
 - Compassion is (sights, smells, sounds, textures, tastes).
 - Compassion is (emotions).
 - Compassion is (actions).
 - Compassion is (desires).

Activity

“Find a comfortable position to sit or stand during our Mindful Minute. Close your eyes and focus your attention for one minute on a person who you think is compassionate.

“We’ve already learned a lot in our exploration of compassion. Now that you’ve formed an idea of what compassion is, we’re going to list the qualities of some people who demonstrate compassion, those who have empathy and act on it to help and better the lives of others. Who are people that you think show compassion and why?”

Guide students to acknowledge a diverse range of people such as civil rights leaders, historic figures, men and women in the armed forces, presidents, the Dalai Lama, tragedy survivors, teachers, nurses/ doctors, athletes, family members, peers, and themselves.

“What qualities or behaviors do all these people have in common?” List these on the board. Examples might include: loving, generous, stepping outside themselves to help others in need, the ability to confront fear or uncertainty while taking some kind action, advocacy for change, belief in something bigger than themselves, strong values, clear goals, bravery, determination, righteousness, gratitude, courage, peacefulness, hard work, altruism, etc.

“How did acting compassionately benefit these people and the people around them?”
Allow for responses and discussion.

“I am going to give you each a copy of a poem about compassion and choosing love. A complete stranger wrote this after Scarlett lost her son Jesse and sent it to her. What an amazing act of compassion that was! Let me read it to you and then we’ll react and respond to it.” Read the poem aloud and then allow for reflection and discussion.

“Today we’re going to write compassion poems. You can use the format I’ve written on the board or feel free to create a poem in the format that you choose.” Students may complete the statements written on the board in their journals for their poem, or you choose a different format or allow them to create a poem freely. Invite students to share their poems at the end of class. Suggested poem format written on the board:

- Compassion is (sights, smells, sounds, textures, tastes).
- Compassion is (emotions).
- Compassion is (actions).
- Compassion is (desires).

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 12 :

Random Acts of Kindness

Educator Prep

Have a small strip of paper for each student and a box or jar to put them in. Students will be picking a slip out of this receptacle.

Activity

“Take a sheet of paper and fold it in half. In one column, write ‘Included’ and in the other ‘Excluded’. With a partner, brainstorm what it looks like and feels like when you are included in a situation. Think about being included in sporting activities/teams, sitting with friends at the lunch table, in class, or outside of school. How do you feel when you are included with others? Write it down.

“Next, think about the other side of things. How does it feel to be excluded or alienated from activities, groups, and various situations? Reflect on how it feels to be chosen last for a team or to be sitting alone in the cafeteria or to never have anyone that wants to partner with you in class. What does it look like and feel like when being excluded?

“When you are finished with your lists, share your findings with the person next to you. I’d also like you to discuss what you could do to show compassion to someone who is excluded.

“To end this lesson we are going to choose some random acts of kindness to carry out. Random acts of kindness may be small and simple actions but they have a very powerful impact. These little acts can create a ripple effect that spread kindness and compassion far and wide.

“I am going to hand out a strip of paper and I’d like you to write down one random act of kindness that can be accomplished before the school day is over. Examples could include things like smile, say hello to five people you don’t usually talk to, thank a teacher for giving a good lesson, ask someone how they are, etc. The idea is to come up with simple, easy compassionate things that are very do-able.

“Then, I am going to gather these and mix them all up. You will select one before you leave class and write it down in your journal. Your task is to complete the action that is on

your paper by the end of the day. You must at least do this act once, but I encourage you to do it more than once, as much as you can.

“What effect do you think your act of kindness will have on others? What benefit will you get from this? How will it make you feel to complete this task and do this act? What ripple effect might be started?”

Gather the ideas in a receptacle, mix them up, and then go around and let students pick one slip out of the container. Students must then complete their action by the end of the day. Have students write down the random act of kindness they selected in their journals.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 13:

Choose Love Portrait

Educator Prep

Prepare/distribute the 'Choose Love Portrait' digital worksheet for each student. You may wish to have art supplies such as colored pencils, markers and crayons on hand.

Activity

"We are almost finished with the Choose Love Program. We've learned a lot and grown a lot. And I think we've become better people....better students, better family members, better classmates, and better human beings. I want you to take a minute to pat yourself on the back for all of this growth and betterment. Actually, let's all stand up and take a bow! You are amazing!!"

"Earlier in the Program, when we were just finishing up the Courage Unit, we created Portraits of Courage to show ourselves as Courageous Human Beings. Today I'd like you to create a Choose Love Portrait. Draw a picture of yourself as the person you see yourself to be today. I feel certain it will look different than the portrait you created a long time ago. Imagine that someone is looking in a book that houses portraits of members of the Choose Love Hall of Fame - individuals who exemplify Courage, Gratitude, Forgiveness, Compassion in Action, and Choosing Love. Guess what? You're in there!

"Draw a portrait of yourself as a hall of famer...and if you want, add words and phrases around your portrait to describe the amazing person that you are today... someone who is an inspiring role model for others!"

After students have completed these portraits, allow them to share them with the large group. After each person shares, give them a round of applause.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness
Self-management



Grade 6 | [COMPASSION IN ACTION](#) | Extension Lessons

EXTENSION LESSON 1:

The Choose Love Constitution

Educator Prep

- Reference the Choose Love Constitution created at the beginning of the Choose Love For Schools™ course and consider how it has been working for the students and class.

Activity

“Let’s take another Mindful Minute to get started. This helps us clear our mind and gain greater focus and clarity. Find a comfortable position to sit. Close your eyes and focus your attention on this classroom for one minute.”

“Today we are going to revisit the Choose Love Constitution to reflect on how it’s been working for our class.” Ask students the following questions to prompt a dialogue on how their Choose Love Constitution has been working and what updates they want to make:

- What has been working well?
- What could we add regarding compassion?
- How has the constitution benefited you individually?
- How has the constitution benefited us as a whole class?
- Where does it need to be adjusted to better fit this classroom’s culture?
- When has it been the most difficult to abide by?

“I’d like you to take a minute to write down in your journals what you feel grateful for about this class.” Allow for students to share if desired.

“Next I’d like you to think of someone in your life who is a compassionate role model. Who shows compassion to you and others on a daily basis. Write about this person in your

journal. What makes them special? How do they show compassion? How did they make the world a better place? What impact do they have on your life? How do they inspire you? What traits do they possess that you appreciate?"

Afterwards, students can break into small groups and share their journal writings and role models.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 2:

Sharing “Gifts”

Educator Preparation

- Prepare to identify examples of courageous behavior that are relevant to the students in your class.
- Have index cards or slips of paper for each student.
- Draw a picture of a gift box on a large piece of chart paper or poster board. Students will tape their ‘gift’ to the gift box as part of the activity. You could also choose to have a gift box where students drop their index card or slip of paper.

Activity

“Today we are going to do a self-esteem building and team building exercise to set the tone for the rest of this unit. Everyone in this class is valuable and brings special gifts to the class. Alone you have great value, but together when you share your special qualities and talents, you are increasing your value as a whole. These ‘gifts’ when shared help the class be better together.

Sharing yourself and your special strengths with the class is a way to show compassion. In doing so, you are positively impacting your classmates, your teacher, your whole class. I’m going to give each of you an index card/slip of paper. On it, I’d like you to write down one ‘gift’ or special quality, trait or talent that you bring to the class to make it a better place or a stronger group.”

Start with yourself and say the gift that you bring to the class as an example. After students have written down theirs, have each student bring their gifts to the front of the class where they will say them and tape them to the large gift box you’ve drawn on chart paper or poster board.

In lieu of this, you can have students drop their slip of paper or index card into a gift box.

“Remember, there is no one else quite like you. You are valuable and add great value to the class, the school, the community, and the larger world. Don’t be afraid to share your

'gifts', your best self. That is the start to being compassionate and the ripple you create reaches farther than you can imagine."

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 3:

Compassion Quotes

Educator Prep

Print copies of/ distribute the Compassion Quotes digital worksheet.

Activity

“Today I want to share what some famous people had to say about compassion. I’m going to pass around a sheet that has various quotes on compassion. Let’s get some volunteers to read each one aloud. As each quote is read, I want you to stomp your feet twice (or clap/snap fingers) if you agree with it.”

Distribute the Quotes on Compassion worksheet to all. Call on volunteers to read each one aloud.

“For the next few minutes, I want you to reflect on these quotes in your journals. What stands out to you? What is something that you learned about compassion from them? Which quote is your favorite? Write it in your journal and reflect on the quote and why it is your favorite. React and respond to it.”

Time permitting, you can have students break into partners or small groups and share some of their favorite quotes and reflections. You can even allow students to use their phones to find another quote on compassion to share with the larger group. This can be an in class activity or can be an out of class assignment or extra credit opportunity where they find a different quote and give a written reaction or response to it.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 4:

Common Ground

Educator Preparation

Have a timer on hand for the activity.

Activity

“Today we are going to do a little activity to help us get better connected with others. We can have empathy for and show compassion to anyone, even complete strangers and people that we are completely different from. But when we can find common ground, it is easier to have empathy and compassion.

“Finding common ground creates and strengthens connections, and then empathy and compassion further strengthen those connections.

“In this activity, we are going to practice finding common ground with our classmates. This next activity will require us to move about the room. This activity will help us find connections with one another that we may not even know exist!

“Start with the person next to you and strike up a conversation by telling them your favorite things. This can be things, places, activities, people, etc. Try to name as many things as you can until you find one thing you have in common before the timer goes off. If you can find more than one thing in common that’s even better. I bet you will be surprised at the things that you have in common with others that you never knew!

“I will set the timer and after the beep, write down your partner’s name and your common ground and connections. Then, switch to the next classmate and when the timer starts you will repeat the same activity. Let’s find some common ground....let’s get connected!!”

You can set the timer for however long based on time allotment. It is recommended to do 30 seconds per meet and greet so that each student can visit everyone in the class or as many students as possible. You can participate in this activity or walk around the room offering suggestions to get the conversation going if needed.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 5:

Compassion Muscle

Educator Preparation

Students will be using their Journals.

Activity

“We know that we have a lot of muscles in our body. Right now, let’s try to use all of the muscles in your body. Let’s make all of your muscles tense. Tighten up those legs and show those muscles in your arms! Keep your muscles tense and flexed for the next 20 seconds. OK. Now, relax. Phew!!”

“In order to make our muscles more defined and stronger, we have to work them out as much as possible...which involves action and practice. I like to think that we have a compassion muscle too. This muscle is just like the other muscles in that you have to use it to define and strengthen it.

“When we practice compassion daily, we build and strengthen our compassion muscle and positively impact our lives in many ways. A defined compassion muscle strengthens our character, it builds connections with others, it increases our positive, happy, and loving feelings and thoughts, it builds a positive attitude, and it gives meaning and purpose to our lives.

“The more we use our compassion muscle the bigger this muscle gets. But remember, in this unit, we are talking about compassion in action. This means we must go beyond just thinking and feeling in a compassionate way. We need to take action if we really want to work this muscle. We can show compassion, kindness, and concern in the way we treat and interact with others.

“In your journals, make a list of all the ways your body gets exercise each day. Then, count up how many different exercises and for every form of exercise, write down an act of compassion and kindness that you can do to work that compassion muscle.” “Let’s share and compare. Turn to your neighbor and share your lists. What are the similarities? What are the differences? If you gain some new ideas, add them to your lists.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 6:

Power of Our Words

Educator Prep

Preview and cue the following video: <https://youtu.be/Xzg1htttLZs> (can be stopped at 3:20)

Activity

“It is said that the tongue has no bones, but it can break a heart. What does that mean?”

Allow for responses and reflection.

“Today we are going to talk about another power we have....that is the power of our words. We can’t always choose what happens to us, but we can choose how we respond...and we can respond with compassion and love. This speaks about our actions, but also our words.

“Our words can get us into a lot of trouble. Some people when referring to them, have called words a weapon. In what way can words be a weapon?” Allow for responses.

“Here are a couple of quotes about the power of words. I will write them on the board and you can copy them in your journals.”

‘Words are the containers for power, you choose what power they carry.’ - Joyce Meyer

‘Words can inspire. And words can destroy. Choose yours well.’- Robin Sharma

‘Your words become your world.’- Author unknown

‘Kind words can be easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.’- Mother Teresa

“Let me read each one. Clap your hands if you agree with the quote.” Read each quote aloud and allow for students to clap. Then discuss the quotes. Allow for response, reaction, and reflection.

“I am going to show you an inspiring video with the famous professional wrestler and actor John Cena that relates to the power of words, empathy, and compassion.”

Show video:

Reflect and react in a whole class discussion using the following questions as prompts:

- **What do you think of what you saw?**
- **How did it make you feel?**
- **What words did John Cena use that inspired, encouraged, and touched so many?**
- **How was compassion shown to John?**
- **How did he feel? How could you tell how he was feeling?**
- **Why was he moved so much? How was compassion shown? How did words have power and positively impact people?**

“Words are really powerful and we must choose and use them carefully. There is another Arabian proverb that gives some good advice to all. It says,

‘The words of the tongue have 3 gatekeepers: Is it True? Is it Kind? Is it Necessary?’

I think these are three very important questions to ask yourself when you are choosing your words, both written and spoken. Write that down in your journal: Is it True? Is it Kind? Is it Necessary? Let this be your guide.

“To finish today’s lesson, I’d like for you to think of the encouraging, inspiring, and compassionate words you’d like to share with others and the world. You may not be as famous as John Cena....but your words can inspire and have a great impact on others. What do you want your message to be? What power will your words have?”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 7:

Pay Attention

Educator Preparation

Cue the following video: <https://youtu.be/A4a66aFaIME>

Activity

“Let’s get started by taking a Mindful Minute. Find a comfortable position to sit. Close your eyes and focus your attention on a very tiny thing for one minute.”

“Where does compassion come from?”

“We know it comes from having an awareness of the pain and suffering of others. To do so you need to be able to have empathy for others, or the ability to take another person’s perspective and feel the emotions of another. It’s trying to put yourself in their shoes to feel what they feel. But how do we do that?”

“We are going to watch a video that attempts to explain where compassion really comes from, where it starts. Sometimes having and showing compassion seems complicated or difficult, but this video shows us how it starts with a simple action.”

Show the video: <https://youtu.be/A4a66aFaIME>

Discuss the video answering some or all of these questions:

- What were they trying to say?
- What did they mean by paying attention to others?
- Why is paying attention to others important?
- How does paying attention to others help you be empathetic?
- How does it relate to compassion?
- How could you apply this to your life?

These may also be answered in their journals and then responses shared with the larger group.

“Let’s brainstorm a list of ways for us to pay better attention to others.” As a class brainstorm a list of ways to help them pay better attention to others and list them on the board. Have students write these in their journals.

“Today we discussed a very easy but essential way to start having compassion for others which is simply by really paying attention to them. It feels really good when someone pays attention to us and when we feel heard. When we pay attention to others we start to connect with and can better understand them. We become aware of how they feel and their pain, suffering, and sadness. This allows us to begin to have empathy and then compassion for others.

“Today, see if you can start really noticing and paying attention to others and the world around you. Step outside yourself, your perspective, your world. See if this little action makes a difference in how you see, understand, interact and connect with others.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 8:

Dignity and The Golden Rule

Educator Prep

You may choose to write the following list on the board. You will also be reading it aloud to students.

1. Get to know someone first before you make judgements.
2. Use self-control to THINK about how you should react before acting or responding.
3. Put yourself in the other person's shoes-having empathy.
4. Become curious to learn about how other people live and what's important to them, even if it's different from you.
5. Understand that many cultures have different expectations when it comes to relationships, communicating with each other, style of dress, food and even religious beliefs- and that's OK.
6. Remember that different doesn't mean bad or worse- different just means different.
7. Be a leader and show others how to be kind and treat others with respect.
8. Self-regulate, or control your anger and other emotions, so you can look at situations clearly and interact with others in a positive way.
9. Appreciate and treat every living thing with care.

Activity

“There are over 7 billion people on planet earth and not a single one of us is like another... even down to the tiniest atoms and cells in our bodies. Did you know that no two fingerprints are even alike? But, we all share at least one common desire and that is to love and be loved, to be treated with dignity.

“Treating someone with dignity means we are sensitive to their needs, it means doing one's best for them, it means showing them care, it means respecting their individuality and differences, it means acting in a way that supports and promotes them rather than undermining their self-respect. In a nut shell, it means treating everybody like they are a somebody, like they are important and valuable.

“You may have heard of the Golden Rule. Merriam Webster dictionary defines the Golden Rule as a general rule for how to behave that says that you should treat people the way you would like other people to treat you. In other words, give out to others what you

would want to receive if the roles were reversed. We can apply this rule to almost every interaction we have with people.

“The Golden Rule carries a message that all cultures, religions, ethnicities, and genders can appreciate. This rule reminds us to think before we act or speak and ask ourselves: ‘How would I react if this was being done/said to me?’”

“Let’s remind ourselves of some of the ways we can immediately start practicing treating others with dignity and practice the Golden Rule. I jotted down a few ideas.” (read list)

“What else could we add to this list? Let’s brainstorm some more ideas.” Allow for some responses and add these to a list on the board.

“Can you think of a time you treated someone badly because of differences....because they look, speak, dress, or act differently than you? If you could go back to that moment how you would change your actions to reflect dignity and respect for the other person?”

“Has anyone ever treated you in a way that did not show respect and dignity? How did it make you feel?”

“Do you follow The Golden Rule? Give an example of a situation when you followed the Golden Rule and treated someone different from you with dignity and respect. How did it make you feel?”

“Make a list in your notebook of all the ways you want to be treated by others. Try to name as many things as you can. Then go back and put a check mark next to each thing on your list that you extend to others.

“Here’s an example to help get you started.” Write the following on the board as an example:

‘How I Like to Be Treated’ I expect people to treat me with respect, even if we disagree on something. I like when people are kind to me when I am feeling upset. I think it’s nice when people say thank you, you’re welcome, and please. I enjoy meeting new friends with different interests so I can try new things.

“Remember the Golden Rule says we should treat others the way we want to be treated. So everything on your list should have a check mark by it. If it doesn’t, it’s never too late to change your behaviors. Focus on the things that you didn’t check off and start doing these things for others. This is a great place to start in changing your actions and to start

being a more respectful and compassionate person. And let the Golden Rule be one of your affirmations. Take a page of your journal and write it in big bold letters. Decorate it like it's in bright lights making it stand out and drive your behaviors, choices, and responses."

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 9:

Being Kind to Me From A to Z

Educator Prep

Prepare/distribute “Being Kind to Me” digital worksheet.

Activity

“Today let’s practice some more self compassion by showing ourselves a little kindness. For some reason, sometimes it’s easier to be kind to a total stranger than it is to be kind to ourselves. We often get down on ourselves and become overly critical, spending more time pointing out our faults instead of our strengths. If you are constantly putting yourself down, how do you think this will affect how you feel about yourself? Will it be more difficult to show compassion to others if you are feeling this way? How can you show kindness to others if you can’t show kindness to yourself?”

“Remember, we have to show compassion to ourselves first. This builds our self-esteem and creates positive feelings in ourselves that build compassion muscles. When we feel good about ourselves, we want to share those positive vibes with others.....it makes it easier to reach out and connect with others in healthy, meaningful, and positive ways.”

“Let’s build ourselves up today and create some of those positive vibes in ourselves. On the worksheet, start with the letter A and list an adjective or noun to describe you or highlight a positive trait about yourself. Write down something you like about yourself that corresponds with each letter of the alphabet. Show yourself a little kindness and compassion. See what letter you can get up to using all positive words to describe yourself. Here are some examples to get started.”

A - Adventurous B - Brave C - Caring D - Daydreamer E - Empathetic

“See if you can make it all the way to the letter Z! Write as many as you can in your journals.” Time permitting you can have students share a few of their letter responses.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

EXTENSION LESSON 10 :

Mind In A Jar & Compassion Breath

Educator Prep

Preview and cue the following video, 'Mind In a Jar': <https://youtu.be/QNmMH6tqiMc>

Activity

“It’s really hard to practice compassion when we are stressed, upset, or angry. When our feelings are out of control, it’s hard to feel good about ourselves and connect with others in kind, caring, compassionate ways. As we talked about before, when we feel like this, we need to do something to nudge the numbat to leave the lizard and hug the human. We know we need to keep our thoughts positive and inspiring because our thoughts can affect our feelings and then these thoughts and feelings affect our behaviors.

“We are going to watch a brief video that talks a little bit more about our minds, thoughts, and feelings.”

Show the following video: <https://youtu.be/QNmMH6tqiMc>

“This video used a glass of water with swirling sand as an analogy for our minds when we are stressed, angry, upset, anxious or scared....when our minds are full of racing thoughts and feelings, particularly negative or challenging ones. It’s important to remember a few things..... first, we need to think about what we’re thinking about.

“Second, we need to keep our thoughts positive. Last, we need to calm ourselves when we are overwhelmed by our thoughts and feelings. This video showed a simple way to calm ourselves. By taking deep breaths and focusing on or imagining the sand settling, we can settle ourselves, calming our minds, hearts and bodies. This is a mindfulness exercise.”

“We’ve learned a lot of mindfulness activities. One that we’ve done a lot is diaphragmatic, or deep belly breathing. Today we are going to learn a Compassion Breath. Before we learn and take a Compassion Breath, let’s set an intention. Remember, an intention is a purpose or a reason for doing something. It can also be a statement about how you hope to participate in something. Our intention for today is: ‘May my heart be open to show

compassion to myself and others.’ Say that quietly to yourself. I’ll repeat it one more time: ‘May my heart be open to show compassion to myself and others.’

“Now let’s learn a Compassion Breath. Place one hand on your heart and one hand on your belly. Close your eyes. Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose...and slowly breathe out through your mouth. When you breathe in, feel your belly rise and imagine your heart growing bigger as it fills with love and compassion. As you breathe in, think to yourself, ‘May my heart be open to show compassion to myself and others.’ Continue breathing slowly and deeply, in through your nose and out through your mouth.”

“As we keep breathing, let’s relax our bodies. Inhale, and bring your attention to the top of your head. Place your hands on the top of your head. Relax your head and neck and say to yourself, ‘May my mind be calm and relaxed so that I can show compassion to myself and others’. Place both hands on your heart and say, ‘May my heart be open to practicing compassion.’ Now, relax your legs and feet and say, ‘May my feet carry me safely, and may I bring compassion wherever I go.’ Finally, relax your whole body and say to yourself, ‘ May I bring compassion to the whole world.’”

“Take one more slow, deep breath and picture yourself spreading kindness and compassion to yourself and others. Then open your eyes. You should be feeling more relaxed. Are your mind and heart feeling calmer and more at ease? Are you feeling less stressed and more compassion?”

“Compassion Breaths are a great mindfulness tool to settle that mind of ours that has thoughts and feelings swirling about like a tornado. Breathing in this way is a way to show self compassion. It helps us relax and de-stress and move away from negative thoughts and feelings and focus on compassion. We can use Compassion Breaths to nudge the numbat to leave the lizard and hug the human brain which allows us to better act, respond, and interact with others.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness, Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 11 :

The Willow Tree

Educator Prep

- Prepare/distribute The Willow Tree poem via digital worksheet.
- Preview/prepare for discussion about historic figures/celebrities, etc. who have demonstrated compassion.
- Write the following poem format on the board or you may choose a different format or allow students to create poems freely.
 - Compassion is (sights, smells, sounds, textures, tastes).
 - Compassion is (emotions).
 - Compassion is (actions).
 - Compassion is (desires).

Activity

“Find a comfortable position to sit or stand during our Mindful Minute. Close your eyes and focus your attention for one minute on a person who you think is compassionate.

“We’ve already learned a lot in our exploration of compassion. Now that you’ve formed an idea of what compassion is, we’re going to list the qualities of some people who demonstrate compassion, those who have empathy and act on it to help and better the lives of others. Who are people that you think show compassion and why?”

Guide students to acknowledge a diverse range of people such as civil rights leaders, historic figures, men and women in the armed forces, presidents, the Dalai Lama, tragedy survivors, teachers, nurses/ doctors, athletes, family members, peers, and themselves.

“What qualities or behaviors do all these people have in common?” List these on the board. Examples might include: loving, generous, stepping outside themselves to help others in need, the ability to confront fear or uncertainty while taking some kind action, advocacy for change, belief in something bigger than themselves, strong values, clear goals, bravery, determination, righteousness, gratitude, courage, peacefulness, hard work, altruism, etc.

“How did acting compassionately benefit these people and the people around them?”
Allow for responses and discussion.

“I am going to give you each a copy of a poem about compassion and choosing love. A complete stranger wrote this after Scarlett lost her son Jesse and sent it to her. What an amazing act of compassion that was! Let me read it to you and then we’ll react and respond to it.” Read the poem aloud and then allow for reflection and discussion.

“Today we’re going to write compassion poems. You can use the format I’ve written on the board or feel free to create a poem in the format that you choose.” Students may complete the statements written on the board in their journals for their poem, or you choose a different format or allow them to create a poem freely. Invite students to share their poems at the end of class. Suggested poem format written on the board:

- Compassion is (sights, smells, sounds, textures, tastes).
- Compassion is (emotions).
- Compassion is (actions).
- Compassion is (desires).

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 12 :

Random Acts of Kindness

Educator Prep

Have a small strip of paper for each student and a box or jar to put them in. Students will be picking a slip out of this receptacle.

Activity

“Take a sheet of paper and fold it in half. In one column, write ‘Included’ and in the other ‘Excluded’. With a partner, brainstorm what it looks like and feels like when you are included in a situation. Think about being included in sporting activities/teams, sitting with friends at the lunch table, in class, or outside of school. How do you feel when you are included with others? Write it down.

“Next, think about the other side of things. How does it feel to be excluded or alienated from activities, groups, and various situations? Reflect on how it feels to be chosen last for a team or to be sitting alone in the cafeteria or to never have anyone that wants to partner with you in class. What does it look like and feel like when being excluded?

“When you are finished with your lists, share your findings with the person next to you. I’d also like you to discuss what you could do to show compassion to someone who is excluded.

“To end this lesson we are going to choose some random acts of kindness to carry out. Random acts of kindness may be small and simple actions but they have a very powerful impact. These little acts can create a ripple effect that spread kindness and compassion far and wide.

“I am going to hand out a strip of paper and I’d like you to write down one random act of kindness that can be accomplished before the school day is over. Examples could include things like smile, say hello to five people you don’t usually talk to, thank a teacher for giving a good lesson, ask someone how they are, etc. The idea is to come up with simple, easy compassionate things that are very do-able.

“Then, I am going to gather these and mix them all up. You will select one before you leave class and write it down in your journal. Your task is to complete the action that is on

your paper by the end of the day. You must at least do this act once, but I encourage you to do it more than once, as much as you can.

“What effect do you think your act of kindness will have on others? What benefit will you get from this? How will it make you feel to complete this task and do this act? What ripple effect might be started?”

Gather the ideas in a receptacle, mix them up, and then go around and let students pick one slip out of the container. Students must then complete their action by the end of the day. Have students write down the random act of kindness they selected in their journals.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 13:

Choose Love Portrait

Educator Prep

Prepare/distribute the 'Choose Love Portrait' digital worksheet for each student. You may wish to have art supplies such as colored pencils, markers and crayons on hand.

Activity

"We are almost finished with the Choose Love Program. We've learned a lot and grown a lot. And I think we've become better people....better students, better family members, better classmates, and better human beings. I want you to take a minute to pat yourself on the back for all of this growth and betterment. Actually, let's all stand up and take a bow! You are amazing!!"

"Earlier in the Program, when we were just finishing up the Courage Unit, we created Portraits of Courage to show ourselves as Courageous Human Beings. Today I'd like you to create a Choose Love Portrait. Draw a picture of yourself as the person you see yourself to be today. I feel certain it will look different than the portrait you created a long time ago. Imagine that someone is looking in a book that houses portraits of members of the Choose Love Hall of Fame - individuals who exemplify Courage, Gratitude, Forgiveness, Compassion in Action, and Choosing Love. Guess what? You're in there!

"Draw a portrait of yourself as a hall of famer...and if you want, add words and phrases around your portrait to describe the amazing person that you are today... someone who is an inspiring role model for others!"

After students have completed these portraits, allow them to share them with the large group. After each person shares, give them a round of applause.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness
Self-management