



Choose Love For Schools™

Grade 7

Compilation of All Lessons in All Units



Seventh Grade| COURAGE

Grade 7, 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. We have included a Family/Caregiver Letter in the Educator Guide, as well as in the Essential Resources Section of this course. This letter can be sent home to families to let them know about the program and its benefits. We have also included links to instructional videos and

discussion guides from our Choose Love For Home program and invite you to utilize them to further integrate the school-home connection.

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



Seventh Grade| COURAGE

Introductory Lesson: Preparing for Our Choose Love Journey

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Create Choose Love Journals.➤ Interpret the definition of courage➤ Discuss the meaning and application of courage.➤ Construct a Choose Love Constitution	<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

- 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:

Discovering Courage

Small and large acts of courage can benefit us in many ways

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Define courage.
- Compare and contrast everyday and heroic acts of courage.
- Rate scenarios on a courage scale.
- Cite the benefits of practicing courage.
- Create a courage mural.

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- 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.
- See Additional Resources tab online for interactive platform suggestions for remote learning.

- **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.”

“Courage has many benefits. It helps 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?”

Answers may include: brave, strong, confident, happy, excited, relieved, bold, powerful, proud, etc.

“How has acting courageously benefited you in your life? When you practiced courage, what mental, emotional and physical benefits did you experience? What have you achieved as a result of having courage? Let’s brainstorm a list for each category.”

Write Physical, Mental, and Emotional as the headings for 3 columns. Allow for sharing of varied responses.

Mental responses should include:

- believing in themselves more
- increased confidence
- learning something new
- knowing they can achieve something
- increased focus and concentration
- helps them become a leader
- empowers you to make good choices
- helps you accomplish things
- helps you avoid unnecessary risks

Emotional responses should include:

- helps us control and master our emotions
- helps us overcome fear
- decreased stress and worry
- increased pride and happiness
- feeling- brave, confident, strong, proud, happy, relieved, excited, powerful, and bold

Physical responses should include:

- better sleep, fewer headaches
- less tension
- feel calmer
- a rush of energy or strength
- less physical harm to self as you avoid risky behaviors
- lower levels of cortisol which causes stress
- slows down heart rate.

Have students copy some of the benefits in their journals or you can type them up and hand them out to students at a later date. Time permitting, you could also continue this lesson having students research the benefits of courage online or in the library.

“As you can see there are so many benefits to having and showing courage. It seems silly not to try it out. Let’s decide today that we are going to have courage and start acting courageously.”

“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?

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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	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ 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.	<p><u>CSED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Performance Character➤ Intellectual Character <p><u>SEL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Self Awareness➤ Self Management➤ Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

- 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://chooselovemovement.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/The-Vagus-Nerve.pdf)
(<https://chooselovemovement.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/The-Vagus-Nerve.pdf>)

You may also 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.



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 any time.



LESSON 3:

Mind-full or Mindful?

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Explain the benefits of mindfulness practices➤ Practice a guided meditation to experience its benefits➤ Utilize the Brave Breath as a tool to help calm down and reduce anxiety and fear➤ Apply Focused Awareness to improve attention and focus➤ Practice the Rest and Relax skill and understand its benefits and purpose.	<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➤ Relationships Skills

Educator Preparation

- The activity for this lesson has been designed to be flexible and easily re-purposed as Extension Opportunities throughout the remainder of the unit if desired. The goal is for each student to participate in all of the focused awareness activities, becoming an “expert” in at least one of them and presenting the concept and practice to the rest of the class. In the past, this exercise has been organized into a station rotation in the classroom, but given current safety and distancing

regulations, that might not be possible. Another option would be to go through the Focused Awareness activity cards as a class, and then divide the class into groups of 5 and distribute the remaining 5 activity sets among them. Rather than them presenting to the rest of the class, you might have them journal their reflections, and reassign the activity sets to different groups each class. We have also created a choice board option. To access the interactive activity card sets, please see the ADDITIONAL RESOURCES tab for this lesson online. You may also print the PDFs or cut them into slides and laminate them.

- List the following on the board:
 - lower your cortisol levels which cause stress
 - decrease the fight-flight-freeze mode
 - increase your immune system and boost your health
 - increase connections in your brain
 - improve your concentration
 - improve your attention span
 - increase activity in your prefrontal cortex which is in charge of planning and judgement
 - improve cognitive function
 - reduce depression
 - reduce anxiety and nervousness
 - reduce self doubt
 - increase happiness and increase compassion

Lesson

“Did you know that you have between 50,000 and 70,000 thoughts each day? Isn’t that amazing!? What’s not amazing, is that about 95% of those thoughts are those repeated from the day before and about 80% of those thoughts are negative! Our mind is constantly working to help us learn, make sense of the world, and make decisions. When we feel anxious, nervous, afraid, or angry we might start hearing negative thoughts.”

I’m going to begin today by asking you, are you Mind-full?”

Write the word, ‘Mind-full’ on the board.

“Raise your hand if you think you are Mind-full. Maybe you aren’t sure. Mind-full means just that- your mind is full of the many thoughts that go through your brain all the time.”

“Let’s make a list together of thoughts that fill your mind. Everyone’s mind is full of different ideas, so even if someone’s thought doesn’t apply to you, we are going to respect everyone’s contributions.” Allow for all appropriate student responses.

“We tend to jump from one thought to another, just like a monkey or squirrel jumps from limb to limb, scurrying around in a frenzy. So when a negative thought springs to mind, we tend to jump from that negative thought to another negative thought, and so on and so on. We are wasting time and mental energy on the past and future which causes anxiety and keeps us from enjoying and engaging in the moment.”

“Our activity today is to break into groups and discover different ways to focus our thoughts and attention, and to choose our thoughts, letting go of any that don’t serve us well. This process is called Focused Awareness.”

“Utilizing focused awareness exercises benefits us in many ways. Some of the benefits for you are listed on the board. They include, lowering your cortisol levels which cause stress, decreasing the fight-flight-freeze mode, increase your immune system and boost your health, increase connections in your brain, improve your concentration, improve your attention span, increase activity in your prefrontal cortex which is in charge of planning and judgement, improve cognitive function, reduce depression, reduce anxiety and nervousness, reduce self doubt, increase happiness and increase compassion.”

“There are five different focused awareness exercises that we will focus on today; affirmations, mindful minutes, brave breaths, rest and relax and visualization. Each group will receive an overview of the strategy and some activities to practice the skill. Once you’ve had time to understand and practice the Focused Awareness strategy, we will come back together as a group and hear from each team on how they felt after practicing each activity and what they feel are the benefits and positives to their specific exercise.”

Break students up into groups and give each group the instructions from the educator prep to match their assigned Focused Awareness exercise. While students are practicing, encourage them to tune into how their body feels and what they find helpful about their particular strategy. Groups may need about 10-15 minutes to read, practice and discuss their activity before coming back together in the larger group.

“Let’s take a few minutes to have each group share their experiences. While you’re sharing, I will be writing some notes under each strategy so when you may want or need to use a Focused Awareness skill, you can choose which feels right to you in the moment.”

Allow for students to share their experiences and what they liked about each activity. Try to keep the conversation and experiences focused on the benefits and the positives.

Students are more likely to engage in Focused Awareness skills if they know the benefits and connect the activity with a positive mindset.

Call to Action

Research and try at least two of the other mindfulness strategies that you didn't practice today. Rate them from 1 to 3 (1 being your favorite) and share your thoughts on each on in your Choose Love journal.



LESSON 4:

Facing Feelings

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Build awareness of personal feelings➤ Connect thoughts and behaviors.➤ Practice the mindfulness technique of affirmations➤ Identify a personal fear and use focused awareness to choose a positive response	<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➤ Relationships Skills

Educator Prep

- Write the following quote on the board, '*You cannot swim for new horizons if you don't have the courage to lose sight of the shore.*' – William Faulkner
- Preview and cue the following video, '[Alfred & Shadow- A Short Story About Emotions](https://safesha.re/jdu)' (https://safesha.re/jdu)
- Prepare audio: [Mindful Minute with David Romanelli \(2\)](#)

Lesson

“We’re going to begin today by practicing one of our new focused awareness skills, the mindful minute. Take a moment to quiet your mind and pay attention to the sights and sounds around you.”

Play audio: [Mindful Minute with David Romanelli \(2\)](#)

“How do you feel? What do you notice about your mind and body now that we’ve taken time to help ourselves come into the present moment?”

Allow for a short student discussion.

Write or refer to the quote on the board: “You cannot swim for new horizons if you don’t have the courage to lose sight of the shore.” – William Faulkner

“What do you think is meant by this quote? Do you agree/disagree and why? How does this relate to you and your life? How does this relate to our talk about Courage? What does this quote say about your feelings, namely fear?” Allow for discussion and reflection.

“We are becoming more self-aware. When you are self-aware, you are more tuned into your thoughts, feelings, physical signs, gut intuitions and wants at any given time. Last class, we talked about our thoughts and learned some new ways to get a handle on them. For the next few days, we are going to be talking about our emotions.”

“It can be particularly hard to be aware of and accept our emotions. But it’s really important that we do this....because our emotions can greatly influence our thoughts and behaviors. And if we don’t get a handle on them, we can easily make very poor choices that can hurt ourselves and others. We are going to watch a quick video that explains our emotions, how they affect us and how they influence the choices we make.”

Have students watch the video [Alfred & Shadow- A Short Story About Emotions](#).

Afterwards allow time for reflection and discussion. Perhaps have students write down in their journal a few things they learned or a couple things that stood out most to them to share.

“It’s really important to be aware of your true feelings. And then, we have to accept them. Accepting them doesn’t mean you have to like some of these challenging feelings like anger, sadness, and fear. It just means you notice they are there and be OK with that. You have to notice them to manage and deal with them in the right way. Remember, feelings are transient which means they come and go. Just like your thoughts. They are never permanent. And most importantly, you are NOT your thoughts and feelings. You get to CHOOSE to act on them or not, you get to CHOOSE how you respond to them. But don’t forget that you are the captain of this Feeling Ship- you are in control.”

“It takes courage to be aware of your feelings and to share/express them clearly, fully, and in a healthy way. It’s very normal to have all kinds of different feelings and they are all important. But some feelings are harder to deal with. It’s really important that we get a handle on our feelings, particularly these challenging emotions. We need to work on maintaining a positive attitude no matter what we are feeling. We need to be able to move past and work through these difficult feelings by having positive ways to express them. These should be ways by which we don’t hurt ourselves or others...and ways that are positive and benefit us. This is a really important way to show strength and courage and one that can shape your life in big ways.”

“To practice this today, we are going to combine two strategies we’ve learned about already, affirmations and growth mindset. We are going to change our “negative thought loop” because we have the POWER to CHOOSE how we respond. The more often we choose love and positivity, the stronger that neural pathway that we talked about gets and it eventually leads to our innate response.”

Hand out a notecard or post it note to each student. Have them write one thought or event that sticks in their mind that may not be positive or serving a good purpose. Underneath the thought or event, have them write affirmations (positive statements) to counteract that thought or ‘I can’ statements to turn the challenging thought into a positive growing moment.

Examples:

“I’m not the strongest swimmer on my relay team.” – I can practice more. I made the relay team because I’m a strong swimmer. I can visualize myself winning first place for my team

“I’m going to fail my next math test.” – I know what I’m doing. I can study with a friend or practice problems. I can talk to my teacher to help me prepare and study. I’ve gotten an A and a B on the last two tests and I can get an A on this test too.

“Now that we’ve started to talk back to our big emotions, it’s important to keep that work going! As negative ideas or thoughts come into your mind, try to pair them with at least one or two positives or ‘I Can’ statements to help you keep moving forward. Again, it’s normal and okay to feel ALL emotions, but we have the power to CHOOSE how we respond!”

Call to Action

Generate and share a list of ‘I Can’ statements with a friend, family member or on social media. You can do so much when you trust yourself and believe that you can!



LESSON 5:

Our Personal Power

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Build awareness of personal feelings➤ Connect thoughts and behaviors.➤ Identify a personal fear and use focused awareness to choose a positive response➤ Highlight personal strengths➤ Practice receiving encouragement and compliments from peers➤ Examine the importance of expressing a true self	<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➤ Relationships Skills

Educator Preparation

- Prepare “gift sheets” exercise: have a blank piece of paper to pass out to each student.
- Write the following quote on the board: *‘It takes courage to grow up and be who you really are.’ – E.E. Cummings*
- Prepare audio: [Mindful Minutes with David Romanelli \(3\)](#)

Lesson

“Let’s practice another mindful minute. Take a moment to quiet your mind and pay attention to the sights and sounds around you.”

Play: [Mindful Minutes with David Romanelli \(3\)](#)

Discussion **“Look at the quote on the board. What do you think it means? Do you agree? Why or Why not?”**

Allow time for discussion and reflection.

“Many people think that courage has to do with being strong, tough and aggressive, but courage is more than that. Courage is being yourself. Courage is opening up and letting people see the real you. Courage is being able to see your strengths, while also admitting 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.”

“When we have courage, it doesn’t mean we aren’t scared, worried, or sad. Having courage means that we are able to face and even let go of our fears to be our best selves. We find healthy ways to be in control of our emotions and replace fear and doubt with a belief and confidence in ourselves. We always try to make good choices for the benefit of ourselves and others. It’s not easy to have courage. 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.”

“Courage and confidence go hand in hand. If you have courage it builds confidence, and if you have confidence it builds courage. Courage and confidence help us to feel good about ourselves. When we feel good, we are inspired and motivated and can better face challenges. Courage and confidence also empower us, helping us to set goals and reach them. Having courage and confidence can lead to academic and life success. 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.”

“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, etc.

“Today we are going to give our confidence a boost by assessing our strengths and receiving compliments. I will pass out a blank piece of paper. Each of you will write your name on the paper, draw a gift box and then pass it around the room. Each class member will write a positive statement about each other on their “gift” sheet. Each of these compliments is a gift for you.”

*An alternative to sharing papers would be to have students place their gift boxes around the room, distanced from one another and rotating the class around like a carousel. This way students keep their own writing instrument and aren't too close to their peers.

“Everyone will write down what they like about the person. What are their strengths? What are their talents? What qualities do you admire in them?”

Allow a time for students to pass papers around to collect these ‘gifts’.

“After you get your gift sheet back, take a minute to write down what you think are your strengths, admirable qualities, talents, etc. Try to write down some things that maybe others didn't highlight....or perhaps those they don't really know about you.”

Take a few moments to think about the following questions:

- Are you surprised by what others wrote about you?
- How do these comments make you feel?

“Keep these gift boxes 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....and confidence to have courage. You are a special gift to the world!”

Call to Action

Pick someone special in your life, a friend, family member, coach, teacher, etc. and complete the “Gift of Me” activity for them. What are their strengths? What positives can you share with this special person? When you present your “Gift of Me,” pay attention to how you feel sharing positives and compliments with others. We can vicariously grow from helping others!



LESSON 6:

Under Pressure

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Understand some of the aspects of the teenage brain.
- Analyze the components of peer pressure
- Utilize 5 steps to say 'No' to negative peer pressure.
- Create peer pressure cartoons
- Construct a courage word association

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character
- Civic Character

SEL

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

Educator Preparation

- Preview and cue the following video on peer pressure:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6G3l6eS_dEA

- Post the quote to discuss with the class: *The most courageous act is still to think for yourself. Aloud.* – Coco Chanel

Lesson

“Let’s practice another mindful minute. Take a moment to quiet your mind and pay attention to the sights and sounds around you.”

Play: <https://soundcloud.com/david-yeah-dave-romanelli/mindful-minute-4>

“For our final lesson in the courage unit, we are going to discuss how we can have courage in all of our relationships. Whether we are friends or relatives or teammates, we are connected in some way. We are all human beings with the need to love and be loved. We all have the desire to be safe, happy, and fulfilled. Most peoples’ attitudes and actions stem from one of these needs not being met.”

“Wanting to fit in, having and keeping friends, and feeling connected stems from these needs we have. There’s nothing wrong with wanting to connect to others. It’s not healthy physically, mentally or emotionally to be isolated, alone, and disconnected. We need human connection to meet our needs and give our life meaning and purpose. But in our need to connect, fit in, and be liked, we can’t lose sight of who we are. We can’t change who we are or what we care about and stand for. We don’t want to stop acting in the way we know is right, true and positive, just to have others like us. Unfortunately, this is what many of us do....especially when we are teenagers.”

“Did you know that the brain of a teenager is really different from the brain of an adult? When we are a teenager, our brain development is in an interesting place. Molly Edmonds writes on the website Howstuffworks that the brain is like an entertainment system. She says that when we are a teenager, we don’t have all of the wires connected and we don’t have the remote control to use it.”

“The prefrontal cortex is the remote control of the brain that is responsible for making judgements, controlling emotions and impulses, and weighing outcomes. The prefrontal cortex keeps it all in check. This part of the brain communicates with other parts of the brain through connections called synapses. Teenagers have tons of synapses. Imagine that these synapses are wires for the entertainment system. If you have a lot of wires, and they aren’t organized, they can get all tangled and it can cause a lot of problems.”

“Edmonds also says teenagers have an area of the brain that is well-developed called the nucleus accumbens. This area pushes us to seek rewards and pleasure. But since the prefrontal cortex isn’t working too well to curb these impulses, the result can be teenagers engaging in a lot of risky behavior. In other words, we have an entertainment

system with all sort of components and wires and it's not set up properly and doesn't have a remote to make each component work. No wonder life can be challenging right now for you!"

The above information is adapted from the article, 'Are Teenage Brains Really Different from Adult Brains?' by Molly Edmunds. (Edmunds, 2017)

"Not only are you working on making sure the wires in your brain are organized, but another factor becomes very important to your thoughts, actions and decisions, peer pressure. We are going to watch a video about peer pressure to find out a little more about it."

Play the following video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6G3l6eS_dEA

Allow time for reflection and discussion.

"One of the most challenging things that you will deal with in your relationships is peer pressure. 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. You have to listen carefully to the little voice inside you....you have gut instincts and intuition and if something feels wrong, it's usually because it is. It takes courage to listen to this voice, to manage your emotions, and to use your brain to think through your choices. You have to have courage to respect yourself enough to say 'No'.

"There are 5 steps you can use to deal with peer pressure and they are:

- 1. Look the person in the eye and say NO in a calm, strong voice.**
- 2. Give them a reason why you are saying no.**
- 3. Offer an alternative or a distraction.**
- 4. Be ready to say no again if needed.**
- 5. Walk away if necessary."**

"In your journals, write 5 boxes on a piece of paper as if it's a cartoon. Create a peer pressure cartoon using the 5 steps on the board. You can choose from a peer pressure scenario on the board, or you can create your own."

Allow a few minutes to create and then allow them to share with a partner.

"Let's take a few minutes to share our 5 steps to deal with peer pressure cartoons. While our peers are sharing, I want you to think of a specific comment or piece of feedback you could give to support your classmate."

"Great work today! As we finish our courage unit, let's take a moment to share what we've learned and what changes we may have made in our lives based on all we've done over the past 6 weeks. Take a minute in your Choose Love journals to make a word web about courage. Put courage in the middle of the page and use drawings, words, pictures, symbols, etc. to show your new understanding of courage."

Call to Action

Share the five steps to deal with peer pressure with someone else. Act out a scenario where you may be under peer pressure and practice using the 5 steps. You can even video yourself and share it with your teacher or on the Choose Love social media page on Facebook, Instagram and/or Twitter!



Grade 7 | [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: Getting to Know Gratitude

Lesson 2: Practicing Gratitude

Lesson 3: Grateful for Me

Lesson 4: Gratitude Mind Shift

Lesson 5: Sharing Gratitude

Lesson 6: Celebrating Gratitude

EXTENSION LESSONS

Ext Lesson 1: Gratitude and the Heart

Ext Lesson 2: Gratitude on the Brain

Ext Lesson 3: Gratitude Doors

Ext Lesson 4: A Beautiful Day

Ext Lesson 5: Gratitude Glasses

Ext Lesson 6: Gratitude Haiku

Ext Lesson 7: Happiness Boost

Ext Lesson 8: Attitude of Gratitude

Ext Lesson 9: Amazing Me

Ext Lesson 10: My Treasures

Ext Lesson 11: Benefits of Gratitude

Ext Lesson 12: Have To vs. Get To

Ext Lesson 13: The Unfolding Identity Project

Ext Lesson 14: Vision Board

Ext Lesson 15: Growth Mindset



LESSON 1: Getting to Know Gratitude

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Define gratitude.➤ Analyze the benefits of gratitude➤ Examine the neuroscience of gratitude.➤ Explain neuroplasticity.➤ Create a personal prioritized list of gratitude benefits.	<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

- Preview and Cue the following videos:

[The Science of Gratitude](https://youtu.be/JMd1CcGZYwU) (<https://youtu.be/JMd1CcGZYwU>)

[Kid President's 25 Reasons to Be Thankful](https://youtu.be/yA5Qpt1JRE4) (<https://youtu.be/yA5Qpt1JRE4>)

- Project the [Benefits of Gratitude](#) chart on a whiteboard or [make copies for handouts](#): (<https://medium.com/reasons-to-be-grateful/the-31-benefits-of-gratitude-you-dnt-know-about-how-gratitude-can-change-your-life-1cab2b0a7fcf>)
You may choose to review and use [this article](#) to delve deeper into the benefits of gratitude.

Lesson

“In the courage unit, we practiced a skill called, ‘focused awareness’, which means we practice putting all of our attention on something in particular and really hone in on it. You might use this skill and find it helpful when you are listening in a conversation with someone, taking a test, practicing a skill, playing in a game, speaking in front of a group, listening to the teacher in class, or learning something new. We can also practice focused awareness to help us understand and practice having gratitude.”

“Today we are going to practice a mindful minute. During this time, think about who or what in your life makes you happy. Picture those people, places or things and focus on how they make you feel. Do you feel calm or do you want to smile thinking about these people, places or things?”

“Gratitude is the second character value we are going to study this year in the formula for choosing love. What do you think gratitude means and what are you grateful for?”

Allow for student 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, feelings, relationships, nature, attributes, or things you’ve learned. You can be grateful for little, simple things and big, more elaborate things. When we stop to be grateful, we develop an attitude of gratitude which positively impacts our lives in many ways. Gratitude is one of the backbones of positive psychology, a field of study that focuses on personal growth and of course, happiness and positivity!”

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

Show the video: [The Science of Gratitude.](#)

“Who knew that practicing gratitude has an impact on our brain, in addition to making us

feel better and more positive! 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.' We know that the more gratitude a person shows, the more active the brain's hypothalamus becomes. The hypothalamus plays an important role in balancing your metabolism and stress levels."

"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!"

"Now I want to shift from what is happening inside our brains when we practice gratitude, to how our bodies and minds benefit as well!"

"What do you think the benefits might be to practicing gratitude? Let's make some predictions." Allow a few students to share their ideas and predictions.

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

"31 benefits! Wow! Are you surprised by any of them? Which ones and why?"

Based on all of these benefits and the positive changes in our brains, practicing gratitude certainly seems like something that we should be doing! Now, let's make it more personal. What benefits matter most to you from this image and why?"

**You may choose to have the class take a vote all together or students can write their own personal list in their journals. Students could also rank their benefits on a personal copy of the image.*

Allow for time to share at the end of this activity.

Call to Action

Watch the following video: [Kid President's 25 Reasons to Be Thankful](#).

What are your 25 reasons to be thankful? Make your own list and keep it for yourself as a reminder and/or share it with the people you care about!



LESSON 2: Practicing Gratitude

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Practice diaphragmatic breathing in the form of a Gratitude Breath.
- Analyze different ways to practice gratitude.
- Adapt challenging situations into positive learning opportunities.

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: [Gratitude is a Learning Strategy](https://youtu.be/lrHJYeAVoKU). (<https://youtu.be/lrHJYeAVoKU>)
- Have music available to play during this activity. You will be playing a version of musical chairs (alternate activity for social distancing requirements is also available)
- Arrange chairs in a large circle or have students do so at the start of class. Place different color notecards or pieces of paper on all of the chairs. The colors you will need are red/pink, blue, green, yellow and white.
- For this variation of musical chairs, you will have students start sitting in their chair in a large circle. Start the music and have students walk around the circle. When the music stops, they must find a seat and say one thing that they are grateful for that corresponds to the key.
- ****Educator note: Based on social distancing, this activity may need to be modified. If so, you can place colored cards under your students' seats or desks prior to class**

startin to modify this activity.

- Write the key below on the board for student reference:
 - Red/Pink: Name one PERSON you are grateful for.
 - Blue: Name one PLACE you are grateful for.
 - Green: Name one OBJECT/THING you are grateful for.
 - Yellow: Name one EXPERIENCE you are grateful for.
 - White: Name ANYTHING you are grateful for.

Lesson

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

“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.”

“We’ve been talking about neuroplasticity, or the ability to rewire and change our brains. We want to create a superhighway in our brain that is positive and beneficial to us. One of the healthiest habits we can have that will help to shape this positive superhighway is by practicing gratitude. It is scientifically proven that having a sense of gratitude for life’s blessings can improve our overall wellness and help us to be emotionally, mentally, and physically healthy. We can train ourselves to be grateful which can give us all of these great benefits.”

“Let’s watch a quick video called, [‘Gratitude is a Learning Strategy’](#). This will help us understand more about gratitude, why it is a learning strategy and can benefit us, along with some ways to practice gratitude.”

Play the video: [Gratitude is a Learning Strategy](#)

“Let’s talk about some things we learned from the video. Take a minute to jot down a few important things you learned from the video and then we’ll share and discuss.”

Allow time for discussion. If you wish, you could also have students break into partners or groups and have them create a list of the most important things they learned from the video to share with the larger group.

Make sure important points are brought up such as:

- Gratitude is a way of looking at things with a Positive Lens.
- Practicing gratitude makes us healthier, happier, feel safer, and be better thinkers and learners.
- Gratitude is a **Choice**.
- The brain is trained to see the bad, so you must train it to see the good.
- Gratitude must be practiced- the more you are grateful, the easier it is and the better you are at it.
- Gratitude is an Attitude.
- If we aren’t engaged, we can’t be in a place of gratitude.
- Worry and boredom undermine our learning.
- Gratitude is an Action.
- The more you notice to be grateful for, the more you find, and the better you feel.
- You can apply gratitude to your whole life.

“What were some of the suggestions in the video on how to practice gratitude?”

- Possible answers:
 - get all complaints out and then reframe with positive light
 - start noticing things
 - express gratitude to others
 - notice those who have positively influenced your life
 - make a list
 - have a gratitude journal
 - have a positive perspective where you see the glass as half full (growth mindset)
 - try to find what you can learn from situations
 - discuss gratitude with friends and family
 - have a gratitude jar.

“They say it takes 66 days to form a new habit. We want the habit of having gratitude

because we know this habit can make us happier and healthier and improve all aspects of our life.”

“Let’s start forming a new gratitude habit. I challenge you to come up with 50 things that you are grateful for. Remember, you can list people, places, and things. They can be big like the world we live in and little things like a smile.”

“This will be your Gratitude Top 50. Refer back to this list to focus your attention on gratitude and to reinforce the habit of being grateful and having positive thinking.”

“Remember, your mind is sacred and you control what goes in there....so dismiss the harmful because it doesn’t serve you well. Replace it with things that are helpful and positive and an attitude of gratitude!”

Call to Action

Pick one of the following activities from our video on practicing gratitude and try it on your own, or with friends/family. Focus on how you feel AFTER you’ve completed the activity!

- Express Gratitude to someone in your life
- Make a gratitude list
- Start a gratitude journal
- Create a gratitude jar
- Look around at least 3x in one day to find something you are grateful for in the space you’re in



Lesson 3: Grateful for Me

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Engage in a physical mindfulness exercise
- Practice self love
- create positive affirmations to replace negative thinking.
- experience the benefits of giving and receiving compliments with classmates.

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

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

Educator Preparation

Break the class into two groups. The first groups will begin the activity seated. The second groups will walk around to the desks of those seated. Then, groups will change spots.

Lesson

“For our focused awareness today, we are going to try something a little different.”

“When we feel upset, frustrated, anxious or stressed, we begin to doubt ourselves or become fearful because our primitive, protective brain is taking over. Our lizard brain is in charge and we need to find some skills to help us leave the lizard, nudge the

numbat and hug the human. This is an exercise you can do to take control of your emotions and thoughts, center yourself, help your body feel strong and confident and to move to a place of gratitude.”

“Let’s try a seated backbend. Sit at the edge of your seat and reach your arms behind to grab onto the sides of your seat or the back of the chair. Imagine there is a string attached to your heart and it is being pulled forwards. Your arms will straighten and your back will begin to arch as your heart moves forward. Hold this stretch for a few breaths. Release your hands and take a gentle fold forward over your legs. If that felt good, try it a few more times.*”

“Gratitude can improve our lives. Research shows that being thankful for your own self will improve your self-love and inspire ways to build self-esteem.”

“You have to accept and love yourself before you can really connect to others. This isn’t being selfish. It’s taking care of you so that you can be the best you and interact with the world around you in the best ways.”

“It’s easy to get caught up in negative self-talk, which can bring you down. When you are constantly comparing yourself to others, criticizing yourself, pointing out your weaknesses, and looking for flaws, it’s impossible to be grateful, happy and confident. So we have to change our thinking. We have to remind ourselves of why we are special, remind ourselves to see the good, and steer our thinking to love and gratitude for ourselves.”

“An affirmation is a positive statement we repeat to ourselves to help us focus our attention on something we want to do, think or feel. One of the most powerful affirmations is the ‘I am’ statement. We use these everyday like ‘I am tired,’ I am dumb’, I am not good enough’. When we repeat statements like those enough, we begin to wire our brain to believe them. So we have to change the music, change the tune in our head.”

“What are some examples of positive affirmations or statements you could tell yourself?”

Allow for several responses, including your own. Some examples include: ‘I am my own person’, ‘I am good enough’, ‘I am strong’, ‘I am special’, ‘I approve of myself’, ‘I deserve

the best', etc.

“In your journal, make a list of some of the negative ‘I Am’ or other statements that you tell yourself or that you hear about yourself. After you have listed them, rewrite the statement to be positive and self-affirming.”

“How would you speak to yourself if you were showing self-love and gratitude for you? What kind of statements should you say to inspire, encourage and motivate yourself?”

“After you have re-written the statement, cross out the old message.”

Allow students to share some of their affirmations with a partner or in small groups.

“While it’s important for us to be able to give ourselves affirmations and compassion, it’s really powerful to feel appreciated or to receive praise or acknowledgements from our peers. Though it shouldn’t, sometimes these acknowledgements mean more to us than our own opinions of ourselves.”

“To end our time together today, we are going to do an activity called, ‘Compliment Café’ which will help us get a happiness, compassion, confidence boost from our peers.”

“On the piece of paper I give you is a name of one of your classmates. Underneath the name, write one compliment about the person. Dig deeper than the superficial comments like “you’re smart” or “I like your hair,” see the person and comment on something bigger, deeper, more important than the surface level.”

Time permitting, students can share their compliments, or they can hand the paper to the recipient to be read privately.

Call to Action

“Giving and receiving compliments is certainly something that makes us feel good. Write down 3 compliments that you want to give yourself and post them in your room, on your phone or somewhere you will see them often. This helps rewire your brain and

to create a positive mindset which spurs you to make positive choices, actions, and develop good habits.

Also, remember to give out compliments freely.....it may just be the boost someone needs!



LESSON 4: Gratitude Mind Shift

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Persevere in the face of challenges, mistakes and failures.➤ Examine research on shifting to a grateful mindset➤ Reframe negative situations by identifying the positives (learning/successes/lessons)➤ Create a personal Vision Boards	<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

- If possible, have a small poster board or thick piece of cardstock for each student along with a variety of art supplies such as crayons, markers, colored paper, magazines, stamps/ stickers, etc.
- It would be helpful to print some pictures from the internet of sample vision boards so that students can have a model for the activity. You may also choose to create your own vision board as a sample for students.
- The following are great articles on vision boards to give you more information and help direct this activity:
 - [The Scientific Reason Vision Boards Work and How To Make One](#)
 - [How To Make A Vision Board](#)

- [How To Create An Empowering Vision Book](#)
- For more information about the research in this lesson, please contact study author: Jason S. Moser at jmoser@msu.edu

Lesson

“Gratitude is easy when you are happy and when things are going well. But what about when the storm clouds rush in and the rain starts pouring down on us?”

“What about when we are faced with challenges, when we keep making mistakes or experiencing failure? Can we even be thankful when we are feeling frustrated, hurt, down, or challenged? The answer is yes!”

“Will we let our challenges, struggles, and failures negatively impact us or will they strengthen us and help us learn, grow and become stronger? Will we become a negative person or will we be able to maintain a positive, happy attitude? The choice is yours!”

“Remember, we can’t always choose what happens to us, but we can always choose how we respond. Instead of focusing on the uphill climb that lies ahead, we need to stop and be thankful for the journey each step of the way. Showing gratitude can have INSTANT results, making us feel just a little bit better when we need it most.”

“Despite the amazing potential of the human body we still make mistakes from time to time. An article from the Association for Psychological Science titled, ‘How Your Brain Reacts To Mistakes Depends On Your Mindset (2011)’, explores the scientific proof behind the research.”

“Key researcher Jason Moser commented, ‘People who think they can learn from their mistakes did better after making a mistake – in other words, they successfully bounced back after an error. Their brains also reacted differently, producing a bigger second signal, the one that says I see that I’ve made a mistake, so I should pay more attention.’”

“In other words, if we believe that a mistake is a good thing that can benefit us, our mistakes can help us grow, improve ourselves, and be more successful! It’s all how we look at the situation.”

“So, now that we can scientifically prove it- We need to start doing it! Let’s show courage and gratitude by seeing problems, mistakes and failures as great opportunities to become better!

“Think about some mistakes you’ve made or failures you’ve had. Draw two columns on a page of your journal. In the first column write down some mistakes or failures. Then in the second column, write down the positive thing that came from it. Try to have an attitude of gratitude, by reframing the negative into a positive.....what successes came from the setbacks? Why are you grateful for the mistakes or failures? What opportunities existed in them?”

Allow for time to share.

“Now, in your journal, make a list of all of the 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.

“Here’s an 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 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.

“Now let’s put that gratitude mindset into practice! 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....more importantly, what you want to feel.

“Vision boards encourage us to practice visualization which is 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.

“We’re going to spend the rest of our time today creating a vision board. The most important thing is that 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 not only what you want to achieve, but also what you want to feel.

“You can include words and drawings. Put pictures on there or cut out images from magazines. You can include things from your past that remind you of special moments and occasions. Perhaps you include trinkets or notes. Make it tell a story and express your visions and goals in different areas of your life. This vision board represents you and your life story....sort of a map for your life.

“And remember what you focus on expands, so 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!”

For this activity, you can 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. If supplies are limited, you can have students plan their vision board in their journals and then create it at home.

Call To Action

Finish your Vision board and share it with someone (or more than one person) you care about. Do any of your visions align with theirs? What would they put on their vision board?



LESSON 5: Sharing Gratitude

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Brainstorm celebrities who give back to the community/world
- Research celebrity charities and foundations.
- Create a personal charity and mission statement
- Explain why the personal charity is important and what purpose it serves the community and the world

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character
- Civic Character

SEL

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

Educator Prep

Prior to the lesson you may want to think of your own charity that you would start with it's own mission statement as a model for the students.

Lesson

“New research connects gratitude with improved health and the ability to lead a happier life with a more positive outlook. By working to help others, we become happier and more appreciative of our blessings.”

“Let’s take a mindful minute to think about who or what we are grateful for and why. Visualize the person, place or thing as you think about why they are important to you.”

“Celebrities play an important role in shaping our society, especially since the technology revolution. We not only enjoy watching the movies/television shows they star in or listening to the music they create, but technology now allows us to have a closer peek into their lives.”

“Social media has also helped celebrities spread their messages, thoughts, photos, Tweets and ideas to the masses. Many celebrities use social media for selfish reasons, or to send out negative or inappropriate messages. There are many celebrities who use their fame for positive reasons that can help inspire, enlighten and motivate others.”

Use these questions to facilitate a class discussion.

- Who are some of your favorite celebrities?
- Are there some athletes or celebrities you like for reasons beside their talent or ability?
- Name some celebrities you know of that work with charities or foundations.
- What does this indicate about their character?

“There are lots of celebrities who are very grateful for their success and want to give back. Many have started foundations, organizations and other charities to bring awareness to issues and bring resources to help specific problems. Here is a small list of some of the celebrities and the charities they founded or are involved with.”

- Brad Pitt- Make it Right Foundation
- Jennifer Lopez- Lopez Family Foundation
- Eva Longoria- Eva Longoria Foundation
- Cam Newton- Cam Newton Foundation
- Lady Gaga- Born this Way Foundation
- Leonardo D-Caprio- Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation
- Bill Gates- Bill Gates Foundation
- Matthew McConaughey- Just Keep Livin Foundation
- Peyton Manning- Peyback Foundation
- Mark Wahlburg- Mark Wahlberg Foundation

- John Cena- Make-A-Wish Foundation
- Pharrell Williams- From One Hand to Another
- Sam Simon (Simpsons Co Creator)- Sam Simon Foundation
- Bradley Cooper- Hole in the Wall Gang Fund

If possible, allow students to use their phones or computers (or you can use your own with the students), to look up what these Charities/Foundations do. Students may also look up their favorite celebrity to find out if they are involved with any charities.

“If you started a charity that would help others, what would you choose to do, and why? Who do you want to help and how would you do so?”

“We are each going to create our own charity. Pick a name for your charity and write a mission statement. A mission statement is simply the aim, purpose, and value of your company or organization. Explain why you chose to align yourself with this cause and what it means to you. When you are finished we’ll share these with the class.”

Leave time at the end of the class for students to share their charities and mission statements.

Call to Action

Brainstorm some ways that you can give back and help others today, this week, this month or this year. How can you make a difference? Now go out and help someone in need!



LESSON 6: Celebrating Gratitude

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- generate a list of people to be grateful for personally.
- explain personal learning targets from the gratitude unit.
- engage in cooperative games related to gratitude.
- Write a gratitude letter to someone personally meaningful

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

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

Educator Prep

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.

“Each stage of our life is unique and a learning experience. We sometimes feel as if things are out of control, but in fact we do have a great amount of control. We can’t always control what happens to us in the various stages of life, but we can always control our response. We can empower ourselves by having an attitude of gratitude. We can look at a situation as overwhelming and negative or we can choose to look at it as a learning experience that will strengthen us and help us expand as human beings.”

“Gratitude benefits the giver and the receiver and creates a ripple effect that spreads gratitude, kindness and positivity.”

“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 Web: Have a ball of string/yarn or pieces of ribbon cut available for this game. Arrange students in a large circle. *Due to COVID restrictions, you may choose to modify this game by having students call each other rather than pass a physical object from one hand to another.

Have one student hold the ball of string/yarn and start by saying something they are

grateful for or a way in which they can practice gratitude. After sharing, that student will hold the end of the string/yarn and toss the ball to another classmate.

This will continue until all students have had a chance to speak and toss the ball of string/yarn. Students will all be connected to each other by the string/yarn and by throwing around to each classmate it will create what looks like a large web.

Discuss how the Gratitude Web illustrates how we are all connected in many ways, one of which is that we all have much to be grateful for and we all have the power practice gratitude. Remind students that showing gratitude benefits the giver and the receiver.

When students let go of the string/yarn, the web falls apart which symbolizes how we are more and have more when we are grateful and when we connect with one another.

Name Bounce: Have a ball available for bouncing. Students will form a circle. Someone will start by bouncing the ball to another classmate.

As they bounce they have to say their name and a gratitude sentence using the first letter of their name to start the word of something they are thankful for....ie. I am Stephanie and I am grateful for the sun and my sister. I am Matt and I am grateful for memories or mountains.

When someone gets the ball, they do the same thing. This continues until all have had a chance.

To make it more difficult you can have students repeat the sentence/or phrase of the student before them and then add their sentence.

*Due to COVID restrictions, you may choose to pretend to throw a ball or just call a student's name to minimize hand-to-hand contact.

Gratitude Pictionary: Instead of drawing movie titles and the 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; etc.).

“I hope you “Had a Lot of Fun!” We’ll be moving on to the next part of the Choose Love Formula which is Forgiveness next time we’re together.”

“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!” Be courageous and as always have a lot of fun!

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 | [FORGIVENESS](#) | Overview

GRADE 7, 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: Feelings Master

Lesson 4: Forgiving Ourselves and Others

Lesson 5: Full of Forgiveness

Lesson 6: Wrapping Up Forgiveness

EXTENSION LESSONS

Ext. Lesson 1: The Forgiveness Breath

Ext. Lesson 2: Forgiving Tree

Ext. Lesson 3: Revisiting Mindful Minutes

Ext. Lesson 4: Feelings Collages

Ext. Lesson 5: Special Delivery

Ext. Lesson 6: The Power of Forgiveness, Part 1

Ext. Lesson 7: The Power of Forgiveness, Part 2

Ext. Lesson 8: Forgiving Ourselves

Ext. Lesson 9: Profiles of Forgiveness

Ext. Lesson 10: How To Face Problems

Ext. Lesson 11: Selling Forgiveness

Ext. Lesson 12: Forgiveness Presentations

Ext. Lesson 13: Social Media Smarts

Ext. Lesson 14: Ho'oponopono

Ext. Lesson 15: Forgiveness Rocks



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➤ experience attachment to another by anger, resentment or pain➤ analyze what it means to 'cut the cord' by forgiving.➤ cite personal ways of being hurt and wronged as well as grudges and frustrations➤ highlight how forgiveness heals and mends broken hearts	<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 the following definition of Forgiveness on the board:
 - **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.**
- You may choose to have a rope/cord to illustrate cutting the cord.
- Have two stacks of books available for this exercise.

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.”

“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, 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 we choose to forgive, it is usually because we’ve felt some type of big emotion. When we feel big emotions, the three parts of our brain have difficulty working together to make decisions. In order to get our brain working together, we need tools to help us nudge the numbat and hug the human. One way to do this is with the Forgiveness Breath that you just practiced.”

“Let’s take a minute to discuss the question, ‘WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?’” Allow for reflection and discussion.

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.”

“How does that definition compare to your experience about what forgiveness means?” Allow for reflection and discussion.

“Forgiving is not about how the other person feels, although when you forgive someone it will make the other person feel better. Ultimately, it’s a choice you make for yourself. It is about cutting yourself free from the hurt and pain that someone else caused. When you do this, you are not wasting your time and energy on this negativity....you are holding onto your personal power.”

“Raise your hand if you’ve ever forgiven someone. Was it hard? What made you decide to forgive? How did you feel afterward?” Allow for reflection and discussion.

“When you are resentful or hold a grudge against someone, it gives them power over you. It allows them to drain your energy. You are no longer in control and lose your personal power. You get stuck in negative feelings and thoughts. This is exhausting and not healthy!”

“If you have someone you’re holding a grudge against or are resenting, imagine the two of you tied together with a cord and you have to drag that person around everywhere you go. How does this feel? How does this impact your life and doing the things that you need and want to do? Does it make life more challenging?”

“Imagine the cord being cut. You no longer have to drag that person around with you. How does that feel?”

“It isn’t always easy to forgive. It takes time and practice to forgive. But it will make our lives easier and better. Imagine the freedom of letting go and cutting the cord to anger, hurt, pain and resentment!”

“In your journals, draw yourself as a cartoon character or stick figure. Attach a rope to you that is attached to a big bag. In that bag, I want you to reflect on the things you are carrying around. Write down the ways you’ve been wronged or hurt. What are some grudges you are holding onto? Acknowledging these wrongdoings, these hurts, and these frustrations is the first step in practicing forgiveness.”

“Not only do we need to cut the cord to regain our personal power, but the weight that we carry dragging around this bag in your cartoon is heavy! Anger and hurt can feel like a weight sometimes, weighing heavy on your mind, your heart, your body, your whole being. Carrying around anger, hurt and resentment is exhausting and difficult. 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.”

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. Alternatively, you may substitute another object for the books, or, rather than racing, students can be asked to complete a specific task like solving a math problem on the board while carrying the objects/books.

Debrief by asking 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? In what ways?
- How did it affect your ability to accomplish the task?
- How did it affect the way you think and feel?
- Those of you watching, what did you notice?
- What impact did you see the weight of the books having on the participants?
- How did it affect their performance?
- How did it feel to watch them/participate? Could you relate to that struggle?

This activity can be modified for social distancing by asking students to add different items as they stand next to their desks to give the same effect as the whole group activity.

“Any time you feel that extra weight, tell yourself, ‘put down the weight’. Visualize or draw yourself letting go of what is in your “bag.” 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!”

“Over the course of this unit, we’ll explore what forgiveness means, why it’s important and how it benefits us. We’ll learn how to forgive ourselves and others. We’ll talk about how to manage the challenging feelings that arise when we’ve done something wrong or when someone has wronged us. ”

Call to Action

Cut out a large heart from paper. Draw a picture of yourself and/or something that makes you happy in the heart. Next, cut the heart into ten or twelve randomly shaped pieces. We

now have a broken heart puzzle. Put the puzzles back together as you think about forgiveness.



Lesson 2: Mindful About Forgiveness

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Practice acupressure and hand massage techniques.
- Create and demonstrate a Forgiveness pose
- discuss the benefits of forgiveness
- Synthesize the benefits of forgiveness on cognitive, social, physical aspects of personal life

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

- Prepare each corner of the room with a sign or heading: cognitive, social, physical, and social.
- You may choose to create your own Forgiveness pose to show students as they create their own.

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. That change helps your brain and body move from anger and

resentment toward forgiveness.”

“We’re going to take a minute to find a sitting or standing pose that helps you to feel open, relaxed, peaceful, receptive, and forgiving. 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. Try to have students hold it for two minutes.

“When someone understands the benefit of doing something, they are more likely to do it. We’ve been talking about the importance of forgiveness and how it can help and uplift us. Today, we are going to take a little closer look at the benefits of forgiveness. How have you personally benefited from practicing forgiveness or how have you seen other people experience benefits from forgiveness? What do you think some of the benefits of forgiveness are? Let’s start a list....”

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.

“I am going to mark each corner of the room with a term (cognitive, emotional, physical and social). When I list a research benefit of practicing forgiveness, I want you to walk to the corner that you feel matches the positive impact it has on you as a person. For example, if I say ‘helps maintain healthier relationships,’ you may walk to ‘social’. There are no right or wrong answers and some benefits may have you going in different directions. Are you ready?”

Say the following benefits one at a time, and allow students to move around the room as you do so.

- Lowers blood pressure
- Stress reduction
- Less hostility toward ourselves and others

- Better decision making skills
- Lower heart rate
- Lower risk of substance abuse
- Fewer depression symptoms
- Fewer anxiety symptoms
- Reduction in chronic pain
- Healthier relationships

“Forgiveness benefits our whole-well being, however it doesn’t mean that we don’t feel stress or anger at times.”

“We all experience stress and feelings overload and it can happen at any time of the day and any place we go. It is helpful to have a few quick tricks up your sleeve to help you relax and be calm so you can quiet the protective, primitive brain and get that human, compassionate brain back in the game.”

“Acupressure is an ancient practice where you are able to affect one part of your body through pressure points on other parts of your body. It follows the same principles as acupuncture.”

“There are over 25 pressure points in your hands. Here are some ways to get started.”

“Simply rub your hands together until they become hot. As you rub them briskly back and forth, apply a little pressure into the palms as well. This creates a bit of friction and a bit more heat. After a few seconds, stop rubbing and separate your hands about an inch apart. Close your eyes and notice the sensation between your palms.”

“How does the sensation change as you slowly pull your palms apart another inch? Allow them to move closer together again. How does that feel?”

Allow a few minutes for practice and reflection. Then continue,

“Massage your hand. Begin in the fleshy space between your thumb and pointer finger. This is called the hand valley point. This acupressure point is said to help relieve stress as well as relieve the pain associated with migraines, headaches, tension in the neck and shoulders and toothaches. It also helps to release excess heat from the body. This can often occur when we are very angry and frustrated.”

“Apply pressure or simply massage the chunky muscle at the base of your thumb. This is the muscle that often fatigues or cramps when you do a lot of writing. While applying pressure or massaging, notice your breath. See if it becomes more relaxed and deeper.”

“Finally, let’s apply pressure to the tips of each finger. Squeeze the nail and the fleshy pad of each digit. This helps to turn on your thinking brain so you can come up with some creative ideas, or focus your attention to learn something new.”

Allow your students to play with this space between their hands. Cue them to use their breath to inhale and separate their hands and exhale as they draw them back towards each other.

After a minute or so, allow the students to describe their sensations and what they noticed with these exercises. Do they feel calmer and more relaxed? Are they thinking more clearly? They may even continue to do these exercises with a partner or in small groups.

“Acupressure is another mindfulness tool. It’s an easy way to press pause in our brain and specifically direct our thinking in the moment. Using acupressure we are relaxing and calming ourselves, quieting the reactive lizard brain and engaging our compassionate, thoughtful human brain.”

Call to Action

Practice the acupressure technique throughout the week. Do you notice any patterns about when you feel your body would benefit from this technique? This may help you identify stressful times where you may benefit from using a variety of focused awareness activities.



Lesson 3: Feelings Master

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Analyze personal power➤ Students will view and discuss a video about their emotions and why they lose control over them.➤ synthesize a word association about feelings and forgiveness.➤ cite personal anger thoughts and cues through a drawing activity.➤ Create a 'Wheel of Coping Skills'	<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 the following heading on the board, 'Anger Cues'. This will be the start of a list generated.
- Each student will need one paper plate.
- You will need to have markers/colored pencils for use.
- Start a heading on the board that says 'Coping Skills.' This will be the start of a list generated
- You may wish to make an example 'Wheel of Coping Skills' so that students have a model for what they will create.

Lesson

“Find a comfortable position to sit. Close your eyes and focus on your feet for one minute. As you do, imagine that any stress or discomfort that you might be feeling right now is moving right through you and being absorbed by the ground.”

“When we have been hurt, wronged or betrayed by someone....or when we have made mistakes or let ourselves and others down, it brings up a lot of challenging feelings. This on top of all the other stress we carry just from day to day life can be very overwhelming.”

“If someone made you feel a certain way or ‘pushed your buttons’, this assumes that the other person has control over your feelings and reactions. It means they have power over how you respond, rather than you having the power and control over how you respond.”

“When you maintain your personal power, it means you get to choose how you respond to a situation. When we are talking about forgiveness, it means that you have the choice to feel angry, hurt, resentful, and bitter or you can decide to let those feelings go. But the choice is yours. Forgiveness gives you back your personal power.”

“Emotions can be very powerful. It’s easy to get overwhelmed by feelings and make choices out of feeling certain ways that can hurt ourselves and others. If we don’t find ways to calm down, think clearly, and take the time to respond thoughtfully, we can have a lot of problems and certainly not be at our best.”

“One of the most challenging feelings to handle is anger. Anger is important because it can help us know when something isn’t fair or isn’t right. Anger also lets us know who and what is important to us....what we feel strongly about and greatly value in our lives.”

“Anger is one of those powerful feelings that if left unchecked can cause us to flip our lid. Being able to recognize how our body responds to anger and pick up on our anger cues are really important skills. Anger Cues are the signs our body gives us to let us know that something’s not right and that we’re about to flip our lid.”

“What cues does your body give you to let you know you are angry? Does your temperature rise? Do your muscles get tense? Do you get a headache or start ‘seeing red’? Let’s make a list of some anger cues we may have?”

Brainstorm as a class, the various body signs, anger cues, that let us know we are angry. It would be helpful for you to let students know what some of your anger cues are.

Examples are: feeling hot, sweating, heart beating fast, heavy breathing, short of breath/can't catch breath, dizzy, headache, stomach ache, butterflies in stomach, nervous energy, muscles tight/tense, jaw clenched, can't think straight/confused, jittery, etc.

“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, & deMarci, 2001). When you let go of anger, resentment, spite, or the possibility of revenge, it helps you leave your lizard, or your fight/flight/freeze mode. This can help lower your blood pressure, slow down your heart rate, and it helps you think more clearly.”

“As we’re thinking about forgiveness, and letting go of anger, it’s important to be aware of how much anger we’re trying to let go of. Is it a little or a lot?”

“We can have different degrees of anger about different things. Sometimes anger can feel like ‘pinch’. These are small irritations or annoyances that are like a level three on an anger scale of 1-10. These are easier to brush off. For example, something I only feel a little angry about is..... (give example). I might describe that as feeling annoyed or having a pet peeve. Other words to describe these might be: displeased, irked, bothered, impatient, irritated, annoyed. What kinds of things are low on the anger scale for you? What are your pinches?” Allow for responses. You may want to make a list of these.

“Something I feel angrier about is.... (give example). I might use the following words to describe a medium intensity of anger: troubled, disgruntled, insulted, resentful. What kinds of things are medium on your anger scale?” Allow for responses. You may wish to make a list of these.

“If we don’t address ‘pinches’, they can sometimes lead to ‘crunches’, or intense feelings of anger or frustration. What was once a 2 or 3 can become a 6 or 7, or even a 10, if we bottle up or don’t share our feelings. Situations that challenge our values or identities or those that are very threatening to us often lead to crunches too.”

“Something I tend to feel very angry about is.....(give example). I would use words like fed up, belligerent, irate, livid, seething, enraged, or infuriated to describe an extreme level of anger. What sort of situations or things bring up these kind of intense feelings of anger for you or for others?” Allow for responses. You may wish to make a list of these.

“What would an anger level 1 experience be? A 10?”

Allow time for students to respond.

“I’m going to give you a variety of scenarios. Hold up the number of fingers you think the experience is. Everyone may have a different opinion. We all have our “invisible suitcase” that we talked about at the beginning of the year. There are no wrong answers in this activity!”

Have students hold up their hands to respond to each scenario. You’re welcome to create your own scenarios based on the students in your group.

- A friend doesn’t invite you to their party.
- Getting a failing grade on a project you worked very hard on.
- Your parent/guardian takes away your device as punishment.
- You are accused of cheating on a test and receive a failing grade and a phone call home to your parent/guardian.
- Your best friend betrays you and tells a secret to all of your friends.
- Your parent/guardian makes you participate in a sport/activity/group that you have no interest in.

“We’ve said many times that what is so important to remember is that we can’t always choose what happens to us, but we can always choose how we respond. We have a lot of power and control.....much more than we realize. We have the power to choose how we respond and we can choose courageous, compassionate responses to move past these circumstances and set ourselves up for success and well being.”

“We’ve been talking throughout this program about different ways for us to deal with feelings and situations. What are some skills that we have learned and practiced in the Choose Love Program that are beneficial to us? What can we do to empower ourselves and put ourselves in a positive mindset? What are some coping skills we have talked about and learned?”

Brainstorm a list of the skills and methods we have talked about and practiced during this program. Write these on the board under the heading, ‘Coping Skills’. These should include some or all of the following: Deep Breathing, Power Poses, Affirmations and Positive Self-talk, Visualization, Drawing/Expressing yourself through art and other creative expressions, Writing, Mindfulness Practices, Meditation, Practicing gratitude, etc.

“We are going to make a ‘Wheel of Coping Skills’. Each of you will have a paper plate. On the plate, divide it into eight sections. In each blank space, write down a safe, appropriate

way to calm down and cope with anxiety and other difficult feelings. Pick the skills/ways/methods that you like the best and that you think will work best for you. After you have written all of your coping skills, decorate the plate any way that you wish!”

“These can be a great go-to for you. When you are stressed or overwhelmed dealing with feelings and stressful situations, spin your wheel and try the method that you see. You can spin it more than once if you need to. This is your toolkit to help you cope in a positive, healthy way.”

When situations arise, you can prompt and encourage students to use their wheels. You can even practice using them by giving them stressful situations and allowing them to use their wheels to find a way to cope.

Call to Action

Start by writing the word ‘Feelings’ in your journal or on a piece of paper. Now, think of the first word that comes to your mind and write it underneath ‘Feelings’. Think of the next word that comes to mind from the 2nd word, write that underneath your second word. Continue on like this writing down 8-10 words. This is a form of free association where you just freely and spontaneously express what comes to mind without spending too much time, thinking too much, or making judgments on what comes to mind. After you have 8-10 words listed, go back and look at what you’ve expressed. It’s interesting to see where our mind takes us. What do you notice?



Lesson 4: Forgiving Ourselves and Others

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ cite the meaning and importance of self-forgiveness.➤ generate alternative ways to handle situations➤ Practice making amends for past wrongdoings➤ discuss the inner critic and how its messages can negatively impact us.➤	<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

- You may choose to write “What Forgiveness is NOT” on the board prior to class (see below in lesson bullet points)
- Students will need paper from their journals or post it notes to place on their desks for the activity portion of the lesson.

Lesson

“Let’s stand or sit in a comfortable position. Close your eyes and stand or sit up straight so your body is aligned. You will begin by closing your mouth and taking a deep breath through your nose to the count of 4. After, hold this breath for a count of 4. By holding the breath for 4 seconds you are allowing the air to fill your lungs up completely.”

“Slowly let the air out through your mouth to the count of 4. After you have let all of the air out, stay in this space with your lungs empty for 4 seconds or the count of 4. You should do this breath for several minutes....usually two or three times or until you feel more relaxed and focused.”

“While doing this breath, you can focus on your breaths, your lungs filling with air, or your belly rising. Or you can repeat a mantra or phrase to yourself to focus on. Practice this breath a few more times.”

“Forgiving Others is a process and it takes time and practice. To learn how to forgive, it’s helpful to learn what forgiveness is not. Most of us hold at least some misconceptions about forgiveness. Here are some things that forgiving someone doesn’t mean:”

- Forgiveness doesn't mean you are excusing the other person's actions.
- Forgiving doesn't mean that the person isn't responsible for their actions.
- Forgiveness doesn't mean you need to tell the person that he or she is forgiven.
- Forgiveness doesn't mean you shouldn't have any more feelings about the situation.
- Forgiveness doesn't mean there is nothing further to work out in the relationship.
- Forgiveness doesn't mean that everything is suddenly OK....it takes time.
- Forgiveness doesn't mean you should forget the incident ever happened.
- Forgiveness doesn't mean you have to continue to include the person in your life.
- Forgiveness isn't something you do for the other person. You do it for YOU!

“How do you feel/what do you think after listening to this list?”

“We’ve talked a lot about the power and freedom of letting go. We all want to do our best in school and in life. We all try to do the best with what we have.

No one is perfect and no matter who we are, we will fall short sometimes, make a wrong choice, or fail to be the best we can be. We have moments when we will feel overwhelmed or confused and act out of fear and frustration. We have to accept these moments when we fail otherwise our view of ourselves greatly changes.”

“Forgiving means accepting your flaws, mistakes, and all! It means letting go of bad judgments of yourself. It means letting go of shaming thoughts which say, ‘You are a bad person.’ It means acknowledging and feeling the guilt for the bad behavior or choice, but then letting go of it so it doesn’t define you as bad. Forgiving yourself means letting go of all of the feelings and thoughts that keep you from loving yourself.”

“It’s important to remember that no one is perfect and everyone makes mistakes. You’ve got to use these mistakes as opportunities to grow, learn and become a better person. But you can only do this, if you can allow yourself to let go. You can be responsible and still let go. You can make amends, and still let go. You can forgive, and let go.”

“I’m going to ask you to take a page out of your journal and rip it into at least 4 pieces. On each piece, write down a mistake you’ve made or something in your “weighted bag” from our cartoon a few weeks ago that you’d like to forgive yourself or someone else for.”

Allow for students to complete this activity.

“Take one of your pieces of paper and crumple it up. I’m going to come around with the trash can and I want you to throw it away. Literally, throw the mistake into the trash! It’s time to let go of this and move forward.”

Walk the trash can around the room.

Complete this activity for all 4 pieces of paper.

“Now that we’ve visualized, practiced and officially ‘let go’ of each mistake weighing us down, how do you feel?” Allow for students to respond.

“Remember that we can always cut the cord and let go of the weight we’re holding to help us forgive and lead healthy, happy lives!

Call to Action

Take out a piece of paper. At the top of the paper, write a sentence or two about a time that you made a mistake or poor choice. Underneath, draw two boxes one on top of the other. In these boxes you get a redo. In the top box, write down how you could have acted differently in the situation and why....how would that have changed the way things played out? In the second box, how can you make amends? How can you make up for what you did wrong?



Lesson 5: Full of Forgiveness

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Generate a list of why to practice forgiveness
- Reflect on a variety of personal forgiveness stories
- Generate two reasons why to practice forgiveness
- Provide feedback to peers about reasons to forgive
- Define what forgiveness is not.
- compare and contrast 'Can Control' and 'Can't Control'.
- create circle maps/brainstorming webs related to a specific situation of what can and cannot be controlled

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 brief video called, '[Signs of Forgiveness](https://youtu.be/FxoMbPWuk0I)':
(<https://youtu.be/FxoMbPWuk0I>)
- You may wish to have 2 pieces of paper or post it notes for each student to use for the activity. Or students may pull a sheet of paper from their journal for this lesson.
- Make a T-Chart on the board that has the headings, 'Can Control' and 'Can't Control'.

Lesson

"We recently discussed the benefits of forgiveness. Today, I want you to dig deep and think about the most important reason why you want to practice forgiveness. It's always important to know why we want to do something.....it gives our actions and choices a purpose. And if we are mindful and think carefully about our choices and actions, we have a clear, healthy, positive reason or purpose behind what we say and do. Having this type of purpose moves us forward and helps us to be happy, get along better with others, and achieve our goals. Let's watch a short video and see how others answered the very important question, 'I forgive because....'."

Show the following video to students: <https://youtu.be/FxoMbPWuk0I>

"The people in this video had a lot of really difficult situations to forgive. They still wanted to practice forgiveness. They realize the importance and power of forgiveness and how it could change their life and benefit them to do so. What are your reactions to this video? Did anything surprise you? What stood out to you?" Allow time for discussion and reaction/ reflection.

"I'd like you to think about the two most important reasons why you practice forgiveness. What is your purpose behind forgiving? What do you hope to achieve by doing so? Take the two pieces of paper and write and complete the following sentence, 'I forgive because...'"

"Now we are going to place these papers at the top corners of our desks. Walk around and read your classmates' responses. Put a star on the ones that you feel strongly about."

“Let’s take a few minutes to discuss what you noticed around the room and why you will practice forgiveness. How does doing so positively impact your life and the lives of others?” Allow for student response.

“We’ve been talking a lot about how you can’t always control what happens to you, but you can always choose how you respond. Life is full of ups and downs, smooth roads and bumpy roads, twists and turns. Some of this we create ourselves, but much of it is out of our control. Let’s face it, some things that happen to you you can control, and some things you can’t.....there are the controllables and the uncontrollables.”

“Here’s an example, when you get on the bus on the first day of school and the seat you want is taken. You can’t control that situation, but what can you control? Your response! What decision do you make? Do you get angry and push the kid out of the seat or do you tell yourself it’s not a big deal and find somewhere else to sit? You can’t control the uncontrollable, but you can control the controllable...in this case, how you respond and the decision you make is a big deal and can have good or bad consequences.”

“It helps to highlight the controllables and the uncontrollables. Why waste energy on the things you can’t control or change, when you can focus your time and effort on those things you can control, change, influence, or those decisions you can make. Let’s create a T-chart with the two headings, ‘Can Control’ and ‘Can’t Control’, so we can identify and contrast the two.”

“Let’s begin with the ‘Can Control’ side of the chart. Give me some ideas of things that are controllables.” Allow time for students to respond. Responses should include: attitude, choices, responses, time management, preparation, mindset, work habits, character (practicing courage/ gratitude/forgiveness/compassion), choosing love, etc.

“Let’s fill in the other side of the chart with the uncontrollables, the things that we can’t control or change. Give me some ideas of things that are uncontrollables.” Allow time for students to give you ideas to list on the T-chart. Responses should include: weather, other people, peoples' opinions, peoples' actions, traffic, gambling results (hello, we can’t control what lottery numbers are called), the passage of time, getting older, etc.

“I’d like you to make a brainstorming web or circle map. In the center of a piece of paper in your journal draw a circle and write down a time when you felt out of control in a situation. Try to think of a time that relates to forgiveness, when someone hurt or wronged you in some way.

“Draw lines from this circle connecting to other circles like a web. In these circles, list all of the words that come to mind to describe how you felt in this situation.”

“We can’t control the uncontrollables. If someone hurt or wronged you, you can’t change what they did or how it made you feel. You can change how you respond.”

“Let’s draw the very same web or circle map. This time, in the center write ‘I Am in Control’. Connect this center circle with other circles. In these circles write down all of the things that you have control over and all of the ways you have of being in control or tools you have to make good choices and respond in appropriate ways. Think about some of the things we have learned so far in this program that are skills to help you be calm, focused, and in control of your feelings, actions, and choices.”

Allow time for students to complete their webs/circle maps. After inviting students to share with a partner, in small groups or with the larger class.

Call to Action

Between now and the next class, notice two pinches or crunches you experience. Are they controllable or uncontrollable? How can you respond? Can you think of a DIFFERENT response? How would that possibly have looked or felt?



Lesson 6: Wrapping Up Forgiveness

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Connect to the power of forgiveness by hearing Scarlett Lewis' story.➤ Reflect on forgiveness learning through Forgiveness games➤ Create forgiveness stones as a visual reminder of new learning	<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 for one or both of the Forgiveness Games listed in the lesson. You may choose the activity yourself or you can have students decide.

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.”

“Forgiveness is an essential ingredient as it’s very difficult to Choose Love if your heart is filled with feelings of hate, anger, resentment and revenge.”

“Take a moment to reflect back on why the Choose Love for Schools Program was created, and how Forgiveness became a key ingredient in the Choose Love Formula.”

“On December 14, 2012, 26 individuals- 20 children and 6 adults- lost their lives at the hands of a very angry young man. One of the children, a first grader named Jesse Lewis, was killed by this young man. Jesse’s mom Scarlett chose to forgive the young man who killed her son.”

“Why and how, you may ask, can you forgive that? Well, it’s a process that doesn’t happen overnight and it took her great courage to do so. Forgiving this young man allowed Scarlett to cut the cord to the hurt, anger, and pain that she felt. It meant that she was no longer connected to this individual and that he no longer was taking her personal power and sapping her of her strength, her will, her energy, her ability to be happy and move forward with her life.”

“She knew that someone who could do something so awful like this must have been in a lot of pain. She thought that this young man was once like her son, but something or many things must have gone wrong in his life. She pictured him as a young boy with a lot of anger and challenging feelings, with no tools to be able to handle these big, powerful feelings. His anger grew and changed the wiring in his brain. Eventually, the anger was too powerful and overpowered his ability to hug the human brain, leading him to choose violence, which we know is never the answer.”

“Scarlett realized that anywhere along his path of life he could have been helped and could have learned to Choose Love. In this way, she saw his perspective and put herself in his shoes. She came to feel compassion for him which allowed her to see him as a human being in pain instead of a monster. Once she saw him this way, she was able to forgive him.”

“When she forgave him, she realized the power of forgiveness and how there can be no healing without forgiveness. Jesse left the message on the chalkboard before he died that said, ‘Nurturing Healing Love’, and Scarlett believes that Jesse left this message so that others could understand the importance of forgiveness and how it heals us and allows us to love. This inspired her to create this Choose Love Movement and Program which gives

us the skills to be the best we can be, to overcome challenges, handle our feelings, make good choices, connect with others, and choose love.”

“Today is the last day of our Forgiveness Unit. We are going to play a game to celebrate our accomplishment- all that we have learned, the power of forgiveness that we will practice moving forward in this school year.”

Play one of the following games, or one of your choosing- anything to get the kids relaxing and having fun to celebrate the end of this unit. The ‘Untangle the Knot’ 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.

Forgiveness Pictionary: Instead of drawing movie titles and traditional Pictionary ideas, students draw something related to forgiveness. 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.

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 their cooperation and communication.

“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 intact. It helps you let go of the weight of challenging feelings. I hope you’ll choose forgiveness!”

Call to Action



Create a meme or social media graphic that includes a quote about forgiveness, and share it.



Grade 7 | FORGIVENESS | Extension Lessons

EXTENSION LESSON 1 :

The Forgiveness Breath

Educator Preparation

Preview and cue the following video, '[Just Breathe.](https://youtu.be/RVA2N6tX2cg)'
(<https://youtu.be/RVA2N6tX2cg>)

Activity

“We talked about how we need to make sure the three parts of the brain are communicating and working together. Otherwise, we ‘flip our lid’ and nothing good comes from that. There are many things we can do to help the three parts of our brain work together. We need to leave the lizard and nudge the numbat to hug the human. Taking Forgiveness Breaths is one way to do this.”

“You remember we learned about diaphragmatic breathing in other units of this program. This is the deep belly breathing that has such a positive effect on our bodies, hearts, and minds. This breathing helps us calm our body by regulating our breathing, reducing our heart rate, and lowering our body temperature. It helps control our reflexive responses. 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. As we experienced during our last class, it can help us drop the weight and the burden of challenging feelings.”

“Let’s watch a video to see more examples of how this breathing can help us.”

Video: [Just Breathe](https://youtu.be/RVA2N6tX2cg)

“What did you think of that video? How does breathing help us?” Allow for responses.

“Let’s learn and practice a Forgiveness Breath. 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, 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.

“Today, we’ve learned one simple way to help the parts of our brain work effectively together so that we can feel good and make good decisions. This breathing helps us let go of some of the anger we feel. This is an easy but effective way to deal with negative emotions that can be powerful. It can help us leave the lizard and nudge the numbat to hug the human. It can calm us so that we may think more clearly and feel more relaxed and happy. This type of breathing is about letting go. Just like forgiveness is about letting go.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 2:

Forgiving Tree

Educator Preparation

Provide the Forgiving Tree Template to students, either as a digital worksheet or by printing out copies.

Activity

“Let’s get started by taking a Mindful Minute. Find a comfortable position to sit. Close your eyes and focus your attention on the wind blowing through the branches of a tree. Envision that the leaves on the tree represent the things that you need to forgive- all the hurt that others have caused you, all of the ways people have wronged you, all of the mistakes you’ve made that you want forgiveness for.”

“Sometimes it is difficult to find the words we want to use to forgive, especially when we are trying to deal with strong emotions. I am going to give you each a picture of a tree. I’d like you to add leaves to this tree by writing a word associated with forgiveness for each leaf. What are words that you could use to forgive someone or yourself? Use words that will help you let go.”

Show students an example that you create of a completed tree. If using the digital version of the Forgiving Tree worksheet, encourage students to use different sizes and colors of fonts for their words. After students have completed their trees, have them share with the class, in small groups or with partners. These can be displayed in the class if desired.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

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:

Feelings Collages

Educator Preparation

- Students will need to have a large piece of cardstock or a poster board to create a feelings collage.
- You will need to have markers/colored pencils and scissors for use.
- You should make available old magazines and newspapers or ask that students bring these in for the class.
- For remote projects, investigate the [free Canva for Education](https://www.canva.com/education/) (<https://www.canva.com/education/>) platform.

Activity

“Today we are going to create feelings collages to explore our feelings when we forgive and when we don’t forgive. I am going to provide some materials for you to create your collage. Divide your page into two sides. On one side draw and cut out an assortment of pictures and words that represent a variety of challenging emotions such as anger, sadness, fear, resentment, embarrassment, hurt. Make sure you label your pictures and the feelings represented. These will go on one side of the collage. Next, you will draw and cut out pictures that represent positive feelings like happiness, peace, contentment, joy, compassion, and love. While the first side represents what it’s like when we can’t forgive. This side represents forgiveness, what that means, and what that looks like.”

Allow time for students to create their feelings -collages and then allow time for students to share and reflect on their collages with the larger class or in small groups.

“It’s easy to see the power of forgiveness and how forgiveness frees us from the weight and pull of challenging, negative feelings. Forgiveness cuts the cord that attaches us to these feelings that cloud our hearts, minds, and lives. It allows us to feel happiness and peace and move forward with our personal power to shape the best us we can be and the best life we can lead.”

SEL Skills Taught -- Self-awareness, Self-management, Social awareness, Relationship skills, Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 5:

Special Delivery

Educator Preparation

Have a piece of card stock or nice white paper available for students to use to make cards. You may wish to have art supplies for students to use to decorate their cards.

Activity

“You’ve got a voice inside you that can be awfully tough on you. It’s your inner critic. The inner critic is usually trying to protect us from a scary and unpredictable word. It can have important messages if we listen carefully. The inner critic makes choices and speaks out of fear instead of love. Sometimes the inner critic’s voice and words get too loud and instead of protecting us, the inner critic can hurt us and bring us down. We may hear words like, ‘you’re not good enough’, ‘you messed up’, ‘you are a bad person’, ‘you can’t do anything right’, ‘don’t ask for help, you’ll look stupid’, ‘they won’t like you unless you.....’, ‘don’t do that, they’ll make fun of you’, and things like that. Sometimes we have to shift our self-talk from negative to positive, from fear to love.”

“In today’s world, a lot of how we communicate with others is online. We don’t send real cards or notes to others often anymore. There is something very special about receiving a card or letter in the mail. It’s a personal way to show special attention to someone and let them know you are thinking of them, that you care, that you are here for them, or that you love them.”

“We are going to make a greeting card to someone extra special whom we often neglect or don’t appreciate. That is you! I am going to give you a piece of paper. Fold it in half or any way you wish and decorate it with a special message on the front and images to brighten your mood. Then inside your card, write a letter to yourself. If it feels weird or hard to do, just pretend it’s your best friend or someone who loves you writing it to you. What would they say? How would they motivate and inspire you and make you feel good about yourself? How would they let you know they care and that you are loved and

supported? Take the next few minutes to create these greeting cards to yourself. Really put your heart into it!”

“Remember one of your best friends should be yourself. You should be your number one fan and love yourself, that’s what builds your confidence and helps you to be able to positively connect with others. Keep these cards to inspire you and make you feel happy and loved when you are getting down on yourself. Let these cards and words boost your confidence and silence your inner critic.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 6:

The Power of Forgiveness, Part 1

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

Preview and cue the following video, '[The Power of Forgiveness-The Science of Happiness](https://youtu.be/8o9_TlZyB_Y)' (https://youtu.be/8o9_TlZyB_Y)

Discussion

“Let’s get started today by looking at a quote about forgiveness.”

Read the following quote to students that you have written 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 us the power to be happy.”**

“What do you think of this quote? What do they mean when they say the ‘power to be happy’? How is being happy a special power? The author said, forgiveness is ‘a favor we do for ourselves’, how so? How does it also help others?” Allow time for reflection and 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. 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- the you that is not weighed down, but free and happy.”

“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 video: [The Power of Forgiveness-The Science of Happiness](#)

“So 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.

EXTENSION LESSON 7:

The Power of Forgiveness, Part 2

Discussion

Refer to/ re-view: [The Power of Forgiveness-The Science of Happiness](#). See Extension Lesson 6, Part 1 for context.

“In this video, peoples' happiness increased through this writing exercise on forgiveness. We are going to do this ourselves. 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.” Give them time to think.

“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!”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness
Relationship skills
Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 8:

Forgiving Ourselves

Educator Prep

Review/ prepare [definition and examples of an Acrostic Poem](#).

(<https://examples.yourdictionary.com/acrostic-poem-examples.html>)

Prepare digital/printable Acrostic Poem worksheet.

Discussion

“Today we are going to talk about a different kind of forgiveness....forgiving ourselves.”

“Many of us know that forgiveness is a good thing, right? It frees us from bitterness and anger, two emotions that not only don’t feel good, but they can also ruin our physical health and hold us back from all the good we might achieve and experience. I know that many of you have worked on forgiving others.”

“But what about forgiving ourselves?”

“One of the hardest things to do sometimes is to forgive ourselves. Forgiving yourself is far more challenging than forgiving someone else because you must live with yourself and your thoughts 24/7. We know everyone makes mistakes and makes bad decisions, but somehow letting ourselves off the hook can be really difficult to do. We often relive the moment in our heads with shame, guilt, frustration, and embarrassment long past when others have already forgotten about it.”

“Holding on to these negative feelings can have a very negative impact on ourselves, physically, emotionally, socially, even academically. It can make it very hard for us to feel good and be our best self, when we are down on ourselves. We need to learn to let go.”

“When you forgive yourself, you are not pretending as though things never happened. You take responsibility for what you did or didn’t do and what happened, make amends in the best way you can, and learn from your mistakes and the experience. And then, you must forgive yourself so you can move on. By forgiving yourself you cut the cord and get rid of the weight of anger, sadness, guilt, and shame. “

“When you forgive yourself, you tell yourself that the mistake you made doesn’t define you.....it was a mistake or a misstep and though it may have been a bad or wrong choice, you are not a bad person because of it. You free yourself by taking yourself out of the negative mindset and allowing yourself to move on and leave that all in the past.”

“This seems fairly straightforward, but when we can really wrap our head around the fact that we can’t undo the past, the past is done, those things happened, we open ourselves up to acceptance and forgiveness. Getting down on ourselves and beating ourselves up for our mistakes and wrongdoings brings our self-esteem down. Forgiveness and acceptance can mend the places where we feel broken and bring our self-esteem up. This means we feel better and we are in a better position to make positive choices that improve our lives and relationships.”

Share/discuss definition of an acrostic poem and distribute worksheet.

“Today we are going to create an acrostic poem for the word ‘PAST’, because forgiveness is about letting go of the past so we can move on to a better future. Here is an example of an acrostic poem for ‘PAST’:

People won’t remember,
All of the little mistakes,
Sometimes we make.
Tomorrow is a new day.

“Let’s create an acrostic poem for the word ‘PAST’.”

There is a second, blank worksheet if there’s time or interest in creating an additional acrostic poem about FORGIVENESS. Allow time for students to write, and invite students to share their work in partners, small groups or with the whole class.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 9:

Profiles of Forgiveness

Educator Preparation

- Put students in small groups.
- Review some of the forgiveness profiles on the listed website. Assign groups a scenario/profile from the website. <http://theforgivenessproject.com/stories/>

Activity

“Get into a comfortable position and close your eyes. For a minute, focus your attention on someone you consider to be a role model or mentor.”

“There are many role models to look up to for many reasons. It’s important to have people in your life that can give you guidance and who you can be inspired by. We are going to look at profiles of forgiveness. You are going to be broken into small groups. You will have a scenario you will be reading and answering questions about. Each group will present their scenario and their responses to the larger class.”

“The questions that you will be answering are the following:

- **What are some ways the people in your scenario practiced forgiveness?**
- **How could practicing forgiveness benefit the individuals and the communities engaged in these conflicts?**
- **How does the scenario relate to your life?**
- **What impact does learning about this situation have on you?”**

Give students time to read and reflect on their scenario as well as prepare for their presentation. If necessary, this can be broken into two lessons, the first lesson for preparation and the second lesson for presentations. Allow for discussion after each presentation. Students should be given a few minutes to reflect in their journals at the end of the class.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 10 :

How To Face Problems

Educator Preparation

Preview and cue the following video called '[Motivation](https://youtu.be/XXew7rhnvdm)' which is of Matt Damon giving a commencement speech. (<https://youtu.be/XXew7rhnvdm>)

Activity

“We are learning that forgiveness is a powerful skill or tool to use to help us face, cope and solve some of the problems we may face. It takes courage to face and work through your problems and feelings just as it takes great courage to forgive. Practicing courage and forgiveness are ways in which we can have control and personal power over things in our life that are often out of our control. While we can’t always control the seas, the tides, the waves and the current. We can be the captain of our ship and we can steer our own course and successfully navigate these waters.”

“There is a great quote that says, ‘If you want to change what’s going on around you, change what’s going on within you’. What do you think this means? How does this relate to our talk of courage, gratitude, forgiveness, and choosing love? How might this relate to your life?” Allow for discussion and reflection.

“Today we are going to watch a video of an inspiring commencement speech that actor Matt Damon gave. As you watch, think about what he’s saying and how it may relate to you and your life.”

Show: [Motivation](#)

After the video is shown, allow time for discussion and reflection as a class or in small groups.

“Take a minute to reflect in your journal. How can you be the captain of your ship? What course will you take? What problems will you face and solve? What can you start doing right now to engage and steer your ship through whatever waters you may face?” Allow time for discussion and reflection as a class.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 11 :

Selling Forgiveness

Educator Preparation

Put students in small groups. You may want to have poster board or chart paper and markers/art supplies for students to use for their presentations. Or, to help develop their skills with online presentation formats and resources and/or if teaching remotely, direct students to use web tools to create their pitches.

Activity

“We have learned a lot about forgiveness....what it is, why it’s important, how it benefits you, what it takes, and how to do it. Forgiveness is a choice we make and it lifts a weight off our shoulders and our heart. It allows us to take back our personal power, free our energy, and let go of negativity. The sooner we have the courage to forgive, the sooner we will be living a happier and healthier life.”

“Today, I’d like you to take what you have learned in this unit to try to ‘Sell Forgiveness’. Imagine that you are in the business of selling people on the idea that they should be practicing forgiveness. How would you get others to believe in the power of forgiveness? How would you get them to start practicing forgiveness? What are your key points or reasons?”

“In small groups, I’d like you to create a presentation, sales pitch, skit, commercial, or something of that sort to ‘sell’ the class on forgiveness. Use everything that you’ve learned so far in this unit. Use words, pictures, diagrams, and anything else you may need to teach someone about the power of forgiveness. You want them to be sold on the idea of practicing forgiveness. Make sure you explain what it means, how it can positively impact their lives, and how to do it.”

Allow students to use the whole class period to work on their presentations as a group. Assist students if they are stuck by bringing them back to key points, lessons, and activities from this unit.

SEL Skills Taught Self-awareness; Self-management; Social awareness; Relationship skills; Responsible decision-making.

EXTENSION LESSON 12 :

Forgiveness Sales Presentations

Educator Preparation

Return students to the same groups as in the previous lesson. You may wish to set up the class in a semi circle and have a 'stage area' for students to use for their presentations or 'sales pitches.' You may also wish to have refreshments and make it a fun event experience.

Activity

"Today we are going to be part of a Forgiveness Sales Event. Each group will present their 'Sales Pitch' on Forgiveness to the class. Let's remind ourselves of the Power of Forgiveness and all that we have learned through this unit, as we watch our classmates' presentations."

"Remember groups, you are trying to sell the audience on why they should be practicing forgiveness and what it can do for them. And audience, watch and listen carefully to your classmates when they present.....see if they can 'sell' you. Think about how their presentation or 'sales pitch' impacts you. Are you sold? What key points did they bring up that were inspiring and powerful in selling you? React to their presentations and answer these questions in your journal after each pitch."

Allow each group to present. After each group presents, give students a few moments to reflect in their journals. At the end of all presentations, engage the class in a discussion. How do they feel? What did they like about the presentations? What impacted or 'sold' them on forgiveness? What did they learn?

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 13 :

Social Media Smarts

Activity

“It can be very difficult to get along with others in real life. But today we have other ways in which we have to learn to interact and get along. Social media is huge in our world today. Social media is entertaining and cool and it’s certainly a way to connect with others. But while there a lot of positives associated with social media, there also are a lot of negatives.”

Invite students to share examples of some of the positives and some of the negatives of social media.

“Social media can bring a lot of drama and generate a lot of challenging emotions as people navigate relationships in this other world. The truth is, social media causes a lot of problems between people and in relationships and in many cases it seems to cause a lot of hurt and make people more disconnected than connected.”

“Many people say and do things on social media that they wouldn’t say or do in person. People can hide behind the internet.....but the hurt and pain caused is still very real. And in some ways it’s more painful because it’s out there for everyone to see.”

“I am going to ask that you close your eyes while I read some statements to you. After each statement, raise your hand if it applies to you. Be honest.”

Read the following statements and pause after each for students to raise their hands:

- 1. I use at least 3 forms of social media (for example: Snapchat, Tiktok, group chats or texts.)**
- 2. I do not have any social media apps.**
- 3. I am only ‘friends’ with people on social media who I am good friends with in real life.**
- 4. I am friends with strangers on social media that I’ve never met in person.**
- 5. I have said and/or done things on social media that I regret.**
- 6. My feelings have been hurt through social media.**
- 7. I have hurt someone’s feelings through social media.**
- 8. Social media causes drama with my friendships and relationships.**
- 9. When I send someone something on social media, it is because I trust them.**
- 10. A friend has broken my trust on social media.**

11. I have said and/or done things on social media that I wouldn't say or do in person.
12. I have deleted my social media apps because I have been upset.
13. Social media does not affect me in a negative way.

“Open your eyes. I am going to read through the list again quickly for you to hear for a second time.” Read the list again.

“Would you add any statements? What statements do you think need to be added to this list?” Allow for responses.

“In your journals, reflect on one of the statements that hit you the hardest. Which statement stood out to you...the one that made you think or impacted you in some way? Write about why, how or in what way. Express your thoughts, feelings, and reactions to this statement and how it relates to you and your life. You can even add drawings...anything that reflects on the statement you chose. You will not be asked to share or show anyone else your entry.”

You may invite students to share some of their general reflections on the exercise overall, and/or discuss why they think this topic was included in the Forgiveness unit.

“Now I'd like you to work in small groups to come up with a Top 10 List.....the Top 10 Ways to Be Smart on Social Media. What are some things you should or shouldn't do on social media? What are things you should do or avoid doing to protect yourself and others from getting hurt? What are some ways that social media can be a positive thing in your life? Generate this list as a group and write it in your journals. After you've had time to write your lists, someone from each group will be the spokesperson and read your group's Top Ten List to the class so we'll get lots of good ideas about how to be safe and smart on social media.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 14 :

Ho'oponopono

Educator Preparation

Preview/cue the following video: [Edith Kanakaole teaching the children Ho'oponopono](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyNX9I6T_TE)
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyNX9I6T_TE)

Activity

“Today we are going to focus on an ancient Hawaiian practice called Ho'oponopono. Different cultures have different ways of practicing forgiveness. In Hawaiian culture, Ho'oponopono is a way to practice forgiveness and reconciliation.”

“Reconciliation is the mending of fences, bringing together again, restoring friendly relations, a reunion or reuniting of people after an argument or disagreement. Ho'oponopono is a practice to ‘make things right’.”

“Let's hear how, Edith Kanakaole, considered to be one of the seminal figures of the Hawaiian Renaissance which helped bring Hawaiian culture back into the central life of the Islands, explains Ho'oponopono.”

Show video: [Edith Kanakaole teaching the children Ho'oponopono](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyNX9I6T_TE)

“In some cultures, people believe that one's errors or mistakes in life cause illness and suffering. We can compare this to what we already know about how chronic fear, anger, stress, and anxiety can have negative effects on the body and mind.”

“Ho'oponopono is considered to be a powerful, spiritual healing process. In fact, most spiritual or religious groups have their own practice of forgiveness. Spiritual leaders often help people practice forgiveness because they recognize how powerful it is. But you don't have to be a spiritual leader to practice forgiveness.”

“A mantra was created to help people practice Ho'oponopono. We've talked before about mantras. A mantra is a word, sound, or phrase that you can repeat to yourself in order to help you focus your attention or shift your thoughts and feelings. As we know our

thoughts are very powerful because they can shape how we feel and our reality, which ultimately affects how we act and the choices we make.”

“Let’s write the Ho’oponopono mantra in our Choose Love Journals. It is: ‘I love you. I’m sorry, Please forgive me, Thank you.’ (Vitale, 2007).” You can write this mantra on the board.”

“These words are so simple, but so powerful. They can bring about positivity, calm, peace, and love. Think about a situation or relationship you want to ‘make right’. We’ll close today with a Mindful Minute using this mantra.”

“Get comfortable, close your eyes, and for one minute, focus your attention as you say the Ho’oponopono mantra to yourself or out loud if you want to. Remember the words, ‘I love you. I’m sorry. Please forgive me. Thank you.’”

Allow students time for this Mindful Minute.

“Notice how saying this mantra changes what you are thinking and how you are feeling about a conflict or stressful situation or relationship. How does it reframe things and make things more positive? How does it improve the situation or the way you wish to respond to the situation or person. Reflect on this in your journal. I encourage you to research Ho’oponopono and the forgiveness practices of other cultures. Learn more about the power of forgiveness.”

Time permitting, you can have students go online to do more research about forgiveness practices in different cultures, or this could be assigned as an out of class or extra credit assignment.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 15 :

Forgiveness Rocks

Educator Preparation

- Prepare a small stone/rock to give each student for decoration. These can be bought at a dollar store, Walmart or craft store...or even found outside. They are best decorated with paint pens, sharpies or other permanent markers.
- Preview/cue the following video: [Cultivating Forgiveness](https://youtu.be/2z5BRj6mJ7M)
(<https://youtu.be/2z5BRj6mJ7M>)

Activity

“Today we are going to watch a quick video about some students learning about forgiveness through a simple exercise.”

Video: [Cultivating Forgiveness](https://youtu.be/2z5BRj6mJ7M)

“What are your reactions to this video? How did it make you feel? What stood out to you? Reflect on the video and these questions in your journals.” You may choose to take a few minutes to talk as a class about their reactions to the video.

“In this video, they had some pretty big, actually huge, rocks and they dumped them at the end. We are going to do things a little differently. I am going to give you a small stone/rock....just the right size to carry in your pocket or in a purse or bookbag, or put in your locker or in a special place at home. I’d like you to write the word forgive or forgiveness on it and then decorate it as you wish.”

“You can then take this rock with you as a reminder to practice forgiveness and to remember the power of forgiveness.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

TIME CAPSULE CHECK IN

Prepare a box as a time capsule, or prepare envelopes for students to use. Have the box or envelopes used for the Gratitude Time Capsule available to be opened.

“Do you remember the time capsule we created at the end of the Gratitude Unit? We are going to go back and look at what we included in that time capsule earlier in the year. This is a good time for us to reflect on our intentions and goals, where we were then and where we are now. You are going to have time to privately look at your addition to the time capsule. When you revisit it think about the following: Has anything changed since you put this in the time capsule? Have you stuck with your intention/goal? What have you done well? How have you been successful? How has your life been impacted?”

Allow a few minutes for student reflection. You may reflect and discuss as a larger group if desired.

“Now we are going to add something again to the time capsule. This time, I’d like you to make any updates to your gratitude intention/goal that you think you need to.”

“Additionally, I’d like you to write an intention or goal about forgiveness to add to the time capsule. Highlight a way that you are going to continue to practice forgiveness moving forward. We’ll add these to the capsule and revisit them at the end of the next unit.”



Grade 7| [COMPASSION IN ACTION](#) |Overview

GRADE 7: 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: Finding Common Ground

Lesson 2: Empathy, Sympathy and Compassionate Listening

Lesson 3: The Power of Our Words

Lesson 4: Self Compassion

Lesson 5: Random Acts of Kindness

Lesson 6: Choose Love Commitment

EXTENSION LESSONS

Ext Lesson 1: Choose Love Constitution

Ext Lesson 2: Take a Seat, Make a Friend

Ext Lesson 3: Building Bridges

Ext Lesson 4: Compassion Music

Ext Lesson 5: The Ripple Effect

Ext Lesson 6: You are Meant to Shine

Ext Lesson 7: Coping Skills

Ext Lesson 8: Once Upon A Time

Ext Lesson 9: Queen Rania of Jordan

Ext Lesson 10: Ellen DeGeneres

Ext Lesson 11: Dalai Lama

Ext Lesson 12: Elie Wiesel

Ext Lesson 13: Ah, There You Are

Ext Lesson 14: I Was Here

Ext Lesson 15: Choose Love Portrait



Lesson 1: Finding Common Ground

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Define compassion➤ Pictorially depict what compassion means.➤ Set Compassion Learning Goals for the unit➤ Connect terms related to compassion➤ Reflect on personal thoughts of compassion	<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 in action on the board:
Compassion in action is the understanding of a problem or the suffering of another and acting to solve the problem or alleviate the suffering.
- Prepare/distribute the *Compassion Umbrella* and *Compassion Is...* digital worksheets.

Lesson

“Let’s begin by taking a Mindful Minute. Find a comfortable position to sit. Close your eyes and focus your attention on your heart for one minute. Feel your heart beating and feel alive in this very moment.”

“The last character value in the formula for choosing love is compassion in action. 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. ”

“Choosing love is how we can respond to any situation, however difficult. We all have tremendous courage within us to choose how we respond to situations even if we can’t control what happens to us all the time. We can find things to be grateful for even when we find ourselves in challenging times. We can choose to forgive, ourselves and others, understanding that no one is perfect and we can learn from our mistakes.”

“Compassion in its simplest form is a response of kindness and concern toward the suffering of others. Compassion is an umbrella term which means the word compassion is used to cover a group of concepts that are all related. Some examples of the concepts under the umbrella of compassion are as follows:

Reference the *Compassion Umbrella* digital worksheet; note the terms already included beneath the umbrella: Kindness, Empathy, Sympathy, Tolerance, Acceptance, Nurturing, Healing, Comfort, Survival, Love, Action. Have students brainstorm and add additional ideas.

“What are some of the other terms that you came up with that fall under the umbrella of compassion?” Allow for responses.

“Right now, let’s write the Choose Love Formula and the definition of compassion in action in your journals. Also, let’s draw this Compassion Umbrella in our journals and list all of the words that we’ve brainstormed that fall under the umbrella of compassion.”

“Listen carefully as I read some facts so you can begin to understand compassion on a deeper level.”

Read the following statements about compassion:

- **“Compassion is understanding how a person feels.”**
- **“Compassion is caring about yourself and others.”**
- **“Compassion is lending a helping hand and sharing with others.”**
- **“Compassion is being patient.”**
- **“Compassion is accepting others that are different from you.”**
- **“Compassion is understanding.”**
- **“Compassion is using kind words, actions, and intentions toward others.”** • **“Compassion is taking action.”**

“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. Showing compassion will positively impact your body, mind, life, and those around you!”

“Through this program, you are becoming more emotionally intelligent, gaining awareness of your feelings and becoming better able to understand and manage these feelings. You are learning skills that empower you to make good choices, be your best self, and connect with others in positive, meaningful ways. In this unit, you will continue to grow your emotional intelligence. You will be inspired and empowered as you increase your levels of empathy and learn how to practice compassion in action! Let's get started by answering some questions about compassion.”

Ask the following questions and any others of your choosing to get the dialogue started. Allow for response and reflection. You may wish to have students take a moment to answer these questions in their journals before having a class discussion or they may reflect on them in writing after the class has had a discussion.

- **Can you only show compassion to someone in need? Or can we show compassion**

to anyone and everyone?

- How does it make you feel when someone treats you with kindness and respect?
- How does it feel to show compassion to someone?
- Why do you think forgiveness is an important component of compassion?
- When are there times we must show courage to be compassionate?
- Can you show compassion even if you are angry, anxious, or sad?

Reference the *Compassion Is...* digital worksheet. Instruct students to fill in each of the boxes with corresponding answers.

“Square 1: Write what compassion means to you. Use your own words to create a definition.”

“Square 2: Write down a few characteristics that are related to compassion, such as empathic, thoughtful, etc.”

“Square 3: Now, write down a few examples that demonstrate compassion in action. For example, including others, walking and playing with the family dog, putting yourself in someone else’s shoes, listening carefully to someone, etc.”

“Square 4: Share a time you showed compassion in action.”

Ask if anyone would like to share their examples and discuss.

Call To Action

Lady Gaga is most famous for belting out pop tunes, but what many people do not know is that she is also an advocate for self-love, freedom of expression and a philanthropist which means she works to make other peoples’ lives better and donates a significant amount of her profits to charity.

Imagine you were selected to sign a record deal with the hottest record company in Los Angeles. Upon signing your contract you must provide an album title, cover artwork, and tracklist. There is one catch...the theme of your new album must celebrate compassion. Brainstorm a title for your album with matching artwork for the cover and provide a list of tracks which all relate to and celebrate compassion in action!



Lesson 1: Finding Common Ground

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Define compassion➤ Pictorially depict what compassion means.➤ Set Compassion Learning Goals for the unit➤ Connect terms related to compassion➤ Reflect on personal thoughts of compassion	<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 in action on the board:
Compassion in action is the understanding of a problem or the suffering of another and acting to solve the problem or alleviate the suffering.
- Prepare/distribute the *Compassion Umbrella* and *Compassion Is...* digital worksheets.

Lesson

“Let’s begin by taking a Mindful Minute. Find a comfortable position to sit. Close your eyes and focus your attention on your heart for one minute. Feel your heart beating and feel alive in this very moment.”

“The last character value in the formula for choosing love is compassion in action. 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. ”

“Choosing love is how we can respond to any situation, however difficult. We all have tremendous courage within us to choose how we respond to situations even if we can’t control what happens to us all the time. We can find things to be grateful for even when we find ourselves in challenging times. We can choose to forgive, ourselves and others, understanding that no one is perfect and we can learn from our mistakes.”

“Compassion in its simplest form is a response of kindness and concern toward the suffering of others. Compassion is an umbrella term which means the word compassion is used to cover a group of concepts that are all related. Some examples of the concepts under the umbrella of compassion are as follows:

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“What are some of the other terms that you came up with that fall under the umbrella of compassion?” Allow for responses.

“Right now, let’s write the Choose Love Formula and the definition of compassion in action in your journals. Also, let’s draw this Compassion Umbrella in our journals and list all of the words that we’ve brainstormed that fall under the umbrella of compassion.”

“Listen carefully as I read some facts so you can begin to understand compassion on a deeper level.”

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Ask the following questions and any others of your choosing to get the dialogue started. Allow for response and reflection. You may wish to have students take a moment to answer these questions in their journals before having a class discussion or they may reflect on them in writing after the class has had a discussion.

- **Can you only show compassion to someone in need? Or can we show compassion**

to anyone and everyone?

- How does it make you feel when someone treats you with kindness and respect?
- How does it feel to show compassion to someone?
- Why do you think forgiveness is an important component of compassion?
- When are there times we must show courage to be compassionate?
- Can you show compassion even if you are angry, anxious, or sad?

Reference the *Compassion Is...* digital worksheet. Instruct students to fill in each of the boxes with corresponding answers.

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“Square 3: Now, write down a few examples that demonstrate compassion in action. For example, including others, walking and playing with the family dog, putting yourself in someone else’s shoes, listening carefully to someone, etc.”

“Square 4: Share a time you showed compassion in action.”

Ask if anyone would like to share their examples and discuss.

Call To Action

Lady Gaga is most famous for belting out pop tunes, but what many people do not know is that she is also an advocate for self-love, freedom of expression and a philanthropist which means she works to make other peoples’ lives better and donates a significant amount of her profits to charity.

Imagine you were selected to sign a record deal with the hottest record company in Los Angeles. Upon signing your contract you must provide an album title, cover artwork, and tracklist. There is one catch...the theme of your new album must celebrate compassion. Brainstorm a title for your album with matching artwork for the cover and provide a list of tracks which all relate to and celebrate compassion in action!



Lesson 2: Empathy, Sympathy and Compassionate Listening

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Distinguish between empathy and sympathy.➤ Determine the importance of paying attention to others➤ Connect compassionate listening to compassion in action➤ Identify ways to pay better attention to others➤ Practice compassionate listening through paraphrasing	<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

- Preview and cue the following video, 'Where Does Compassion Really Come From?': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4a66aFaIME>
- Ahead of time, create groups of 3 students.

Lesson

“Let’s get started by taking a Mindful Minute. Find a comfortable position to sit. Close your eyes. Imagine that you have a magnifying glass in your hands. Use this glass to look closely at things. Focus your attention for one minute on all of the little details you see when you magnify and pay attention.”

“So, where does compassion come from? 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?

“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. But what is empathy?

“Empathy is when you can put yourself in someone else’s shoes and are 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. Does anyone have any ideas about the difference?” You may wish to make two lists on the board one with the heading, ‘Sympathy’ and one with the heading, ‘Empathy’. You can list characteristics of and ideas about each.

“Here is a quote about the two by Rebecca O’Donnell, *‘Empathy is walking a miles in someone else’s moccasins. Sympathy is being sorry their feet hurt.’*”

“With sympathy you understand the stress or suffering of another, with empathy you experience the feelings or emotions of another. Sympathy is when you feel FOR someone, empathy is when you feel WITH someone.

“With sympathy, you may try to understand the suffering of another, but you do it from a distance. You may still have judgement and you aren’t really changing your perspective to see that of another. You can have sympathy for another without having to really connect with them.

“With empathy, you let go of your judgements of another or their situation and actively listen to understand their perspective. You really put yourself in their shoes, taking yourself out of your perspective, to really feel with someone. You closely and deeply connect on an emotional level.

“A sympathetic response would be: ‘I feel really bad for you.’, ‘That’s really a bummer.’, ‘Don’t worry, everything will be ok.’

“An Empathetic Response would be: ‘I’m here for you and will listen without judging you.’, ‘I can feel how hard that must be for you.’, ‘I can understand how much that must hurt because something like that happened to me.’

“Let’s practice distinguishing between some more responses. I am going to call out a response and I want you to one side of the room if it’s showing sympathy and the other side of the room if it’s showing empathy.”

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:

- I’m here to listen.
- I don’t even know what to say right now.
- I remember when something like that happened to me and how hard that was. • That must have been really difficult to share.
- I can tell you feel...
- I’m really glad you trusted me enough to tell me.
- Offer a tissue, glass of water, or just to sit quietly with them.

“Compassion starts with having empathy for another....really trying to see their perspective and connect with them in more than just a superficial way.”

Now 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 following video to students: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=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.

“Compassionate listening is one of the easiest ways to do something kind and meaningful for someone. Compassionate listening is when you practice focused awareness in a conversation, paying special attention to trying to feel what the other person is feeling. In this way, you use your eyes, ears and heart to really listen to someone. After you’ve listened carefully, you can ask if there’s something you can do to help.”

“We’re going to practice paraphrasing as a way to practice compassionate listening. When you paraphrase, you summarize or explain something using your own words.”

“The purpose of paraphrasing is twofold. First, it helps let the other person feel heard and acknowledged. Secondly, it deepens the shared understanding of what is being expressed. It builds empathy.”

“In this activity, partner A will take a turn telling partner B about something they are struggling with lately. Partner B will listen to partner A, and then paraphrase what partner A said. Try to put yourself in their shoes as you are paraphrasing. Partner C will observe partner A and B, and then tell partner B what they did well while they were listening and paraphrasing.”

“When I turn off the lights, you will stop and rotate so a different partner is talking,

listening and observing. Again, when I turn off the lights you'll rotate so everyone has a turn in each of the three roles. I will divide you into groups and you can start by deciding who will have each role, A Speaker, B-Compassionate Listener, and C- Observer."

"Partner A, take a minute to tell partner B what you're struggling with. Partner B will then paraphrase you. If you don't feel partner B understood you, give them that feedback and try again."

"Partner B, remember to try to listen carefully and with compassion....try to feel what the other person is feeling. Here are some key questions you can use after you paraphrase: · I hear you saying....? · Did I hear you correctly? · Is that what you meant? · It seems like you feel...? · Did I understand how you are feeling? Did I miss anything?"

"Partner C you just watch closely and notice how partner B is listening. When they paraphrase partner A, notice if they really heard what partner A was saying and reflected that. You will give feedback on what partner B did well."

Following the conversations, debrief the experience with students.

- Was it easy to really pay attention and listen to another?
- What made it difficult?
- What helped you listen with compassion?
- Was it easy or difficult to put yourself in their shoes?
- Were you able to feel their emotions with them?
- What helped you do this?
- How did it feel to be heard?
- How did it feel when someone empathized with you?
- How can paraphrasing as a communication skill help you and others?

Call To Action

Draw a picture of a foot and think about a difficult situation for a family member or friend that you've seen or been a part of. You are going to practice walking in someone else's footsteps. I'd like you to have empathy for the person who is in this situation. Write down all of the things this person might be thinking. Write down how they would be feeling. How might they act thinking and feeling this way? Then, write down a few ways that you could show compassion in action to this person.



Lesson 3: The Power of Our Words

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Discuss how words can hurt and heal.➤ Identify and select 'Random Acts of Kindness' to carry out➤ Highlight the power of personal thoughts, choices and responses➤ Distinguish between angry and loving thoughts➤ Practice choosing a loving thought over an angry thought➤ Connect the ripple effect to compassion in action	<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

- Preview and cue the following video called, 'The Impossible Rice Experiment': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zvShgttlq7I>

Lesson

“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.

“Something as simple as saying ‘Hello’ can make all the difference. It is said that ‘Hello’ is the most powerful weapon against loneliness. Do you agree? Why?” Allow for discussion.

“Now think of a time when someone’s words hurt you? I think we’ve all experienced how words can cause pain and hurt. Take a minute to write about it in your journal.

“It is said that the tongue has no bones but it can break a heart. People have referred to words as weapons. No matter how you view them, words have great power for good or for bad. We can’t always choose what happens to us, but we can always choose how we respond. We can choose our actions. We can also choose our words, both those we use with ourselves and those we use with others. Our words shape our world and the world of others.

“We’re going to watch a cool video called, ‘The Impossible Rice Experiment’. While you’re watching, think about the power of your words.

Show the following video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EI05lwE2ay4> **STOP AT 2:52**

“So what did you think? Pretty cool and interesting right? I’d like us to take a minute and discuss.

You may wish to bring it back to the larger group and highlight some key things that students learned from this lesson and from the video. When reflecting on the video, make sure to include what happened to the rice that was ignored.

“What power will your words have? The power to hurt or to heal? I hope that you will be more mindful of your words starting today, pausing to think before you share written or spoken words with others, making sure that they are vessels of compassion and love.

“Today we are going to talk about responding with compassion. Often we respond without stopping to think. Often we let our initial feelings dictate how we respond. Do you jump into action based off how you feel rather than what you know is right?”

“Just like you were taught as a child... when there is a fire you stop, drop, and roll. In order to get yourself out safely, you first need to stop what you are doing and think, THEN take the proper action. This process can also be used to help put our thoughts and emotions into perspective.

“Taking a moment to pause and think helps us stay cool, calm, and collected and choose better, more compassionate responses. We can train ourselves to STOP, REFLECT, then REACT.”

“It’s important for us to stop and take a moment to try to empathize with others, to put ourselves in their shoes to try to see and feel their perspective. Often when we take the time to do so, it completely changes the way we will respond to a situation or an interaction with another.

“What if I told you most of our problems could be solved if we just pause, have empathy, and choose a loving thought and response? After Scarlett’s son was killed she said at the funeral that she had one request for everyone....a simple request. She asked that moving forward if everyone could just choose a loving thought over an angry thought. It seems really simple, doesn’t it? Yet, it is really powerful. What would the world be like if everyone started choosing loving thoughts over angry thoughts?” Allow for responses.

“If we could just take a minute before responding and reacting, try to understand the person or the situation from a different perspective, and then choose a loving thought it would make all the difference.

“As Buddha said, ‘All that we are is a result of what we have thought. Our thoughts of today determine our life of tomorrow. Life is a creation of the mind’. Our thoughts determine our feelings and our feelings set the perspective for how we see the world. And then this determines how we respond, which then sets in motion either good or bad results of our actions.

“If we can use empathy to see things from a compassionate perspective and choose a loving thought over an angry thought, we can respond with love instead of anger. The world truly would be a calmer, kinder, happier, more compassionate place. And I really think we’d have less problems, less conflict, less hate and anger....we’d have more connection, better communication, more peace, happiness and love.

“It has been said that if we knew the power of our thoughts, we’d never think a negative thought again. So today we are going to practice replacing angry thoughts with loving thoughts.

“I am going to give you an example of an angry thought and how it can be changed to a loving thought.

“Angry thought: I can’t believe he just tripped and fell. What a loser! I got that whole thing on video, too! Can’t wait to upload it to my status so the whole school can see what a klutz he is.

“Loving thought: Oh man, That happened to me one time and it’s so embarrassing... I get how he feels right now. I am going to check and see if he’s ok.

“Now it’s your turn. I am going to give you some examples of angry thoughts....these are things someone might be thinking or saying or things that may be said to someone. With a partner practice responding in a way where you choose a loving, caring thought over an angry thought. You may even come up with some of your own examples of angry thoughts and change those. ”

Write the following angry thoughts on the board. Have students write them in their journals. They will work with a partner to change the angry thought to a loving, compassionate thought/response. After, you may invite students to share their responses.

Angry thought: I hate that kid Carlos! He is always pushing everyone around and putting everyone down. This school would be a whole lot better without him around.

An example of a Loving thought: I wonder why Carlos is acting so mean to all of us and saying hurtful things. Maybe he is experiencing some pain, frustration, or is feeling insecure. I’ll send him a message online and see if he needs a friend or someone to talk to.

Angry thought: You’re fat and your skin is so horrible you look like a crater on the moon.

Example of a Loving Thought: “I feel sorry for her. She must feel so insecure about herself to say those mean things to me. The words hurt, but I know my worth and I hope someday she does, too.

Angry thought: If he looks at me the wrong way one more time I’m gonna smash his face into the locker!

Example of Loving thought: Maybe Joey keeps looking at me because he doesn't really have

any friends and.... we do like the same football team... so maybe he is trying to start up a conversation with me. Maybe I'll just go up and talk with him.

Angry thought: Why does that weird kid sit alone in the cafe? What a freak. I bet he doesn't even have any friends.

Example of a Loving thought: That makes me sad to see him alone. I've never seen anyone talk to him. That must hurt to have no one care about you. I am going to go say hi and see if he's ok.

“Hopefully this exercise has helped you see that there is always a way to think compassionately in any situation. We have a lot of power and control to be able to choose how we act and interact with others every moment of every day. While we can't always choose what happens to us, we can always choose how we respond....and we can choose to act with compassion and love.”

Call To Action

A best friend is someone who is there for you always, even in your darkest moments, your times of struggle. A best friend is someone who is a compassionate listener whom you trust and can talk to....someone who shows empathy and is right there with you.

Write down at least 3 people who fit this description. Who can you 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? Write down the names of these people.”

Now, do another part of the best friend test. Imagine that you are in a tough situation, things aren't going right, or you are getting down on yourself. You turn to one of these friends that you just listed in your journal who you can count on. What would this best friend say to you? How would they inspire and motivate you? How would they show you empathy and compassion? Pretend this friend wrote you a note....what would it say? Write yourself a letter from this best friend. Let it encourage you and show you compassion. Whenever you need some self-compassion or you are in a tough place and need some advice and inspiration.....do the best friend test...



Lesson 4: Self Compassion

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Define self-compassion➤ Practice a Compassion Breath to help feel calm, focused, and open to compassion.➤ Brainstorm healthy coping skills and ways to show self-compassion.➤ Complete the 'Victory Checklist' to celebrate personal successes➤ Practice cultivating a positive mindset to handle setbacks.	<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 the following equations on the board: $9 \times 1 = 7$, $9 \times 2 = 18$, $9 \times 3 = 27$, $9 \times 4 = 36$, $9 \times 5 = 45$, $9 \times 6 = 54$, $9 \times 7 = 63$, $9 \times 8 = 72$, $9 \times 9 = 81$ ****Note that the first equation is intended to have a wrong answer.****
- Write 'Coping Skills/Self-Compassion' on the board as a heading for a list that will be generated.
- Prepare/distribute the *Victory Checklist* digital worksheet.

Lesson

“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. 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, 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.”

“I hope that felt good, to think about that feeling of being loved. We all have a need to love and be loved. In addition, we all experience emotional pain, suffering, and challenges in our lives. In these ways, we are all connected and more alike than we realize.”

“How we choose to perceive difficult times shapes our experience, and our future. Hurt, suffering, problems and challenges can help us grow and transform us in many ways that can ultimately turn out to be positive. You can gain a new perspective on your life. Perhaps you can find a purpose, find new connections and fortitude, character, perseverance, and strength you didn’t realize you had. This is similar to post traumatic growth, that we talked about earlier this year.”

“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.”

“I wrote a few equations on the board. Take a look at them. Do you notice anything in

particular? What stands out to you?" Students should notice that the first equation has a wrong answer.

"When people do this very same experiment, most people laugh and immediately notice the error, 9×1 is not 7, it's incorrect and the answer should be 9. And yet, I answered 8 other equations correctly. Why do we focus on the mistake and what's wrong, when it's so little compared to what's right and what we've succeeded in? Unfortunately, many times there will be people who are quick to judge, find fault, and criticize."

"But we are also quick to do that to ourselves. We can thank our inner critic which is prone to point out our mistakes to protect us, challenge us, and help us grow. But we also sometimes get stuck in negative thinking.....like a CD that keeps skipping and repeating, a car that gets stuck in a rut, or a hamster that keeps spinning around in the wheel."

"While mistakes are a part of life and we want to grow and learn from them, we also need to be able to congratulate ourselves on our successes. Remember we talked about the law of attraction- what we focus on expands. And neuroplasticity tells us that we can wire or rewire our brains for gratitude and positivity....that will make us happier, healthier and propel us to success. Let's brainstorm a few healthy coping skills and ways to show self-compassion that we might use."

Allow students to come up with ideas of ways to show themselves compassion and self-care. Write these on the board and have students copy them down in their journals.

"Another way that we can practice self-compassion and create positive neural pathways is by celebrating our successes and achievements, no matter how big or small they are. If we have a checklist, every check mark is a small victory. Just like with the equation example I showed you, sometimes we focus too much on the ways we've failed or not measured up, that we forget to make check marks and focus on the victories, no matter how small they are."

Reference the *Victory Checklist* digital worksheet and encourage students to fill them out. **"Let's focus on the positives. And for those mistakes or setbacks, let's reframe them in a positive way. What can you learn from them? How can you turn them into victories in the future?"**

Allow time for students to complete and invite students to share some of their 'victories'.

“In the future you can do this simple activity. At the end of the day, in your journal or on a piece of paper, highlight and celebrate your victories. While you learn and improve from those mistakes, don’t lose sight of the successes. This is a way to love and value yourself....to show your self compassion. Just as you would cheer on a best friend, be your own best friend and cheer yourself on. Connecting with others starts with your connection to yourself.”

Allow time for students to share their victories with one another and/or with the class. You can share your victories as well!

Call To Action

Negative self-judgment can mean you are overly hard on yourself, you dwell on the negative, and you give yourself little credit for the positive. It is important to balance being critical of yourself with love and kindness towards yourself.

Take out your notebook and write down 5 negative judgements about yourself. Then cross off each one and turn the negative self-judgment into a compassionate criticism that you can accept, learn, and grow from.



Lesson 5: Random Acts of Kindness

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Execute a random act of kindness.➤ Cite the benefits of random acts of kindness for the giver and receiver.	<p><u>CSED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Moral Character➤ Performance Character➤ Intellectual Character➤ Civic Character <p><u>SEL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Self Awareness➤ Self Management➤ Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

Strips of paper should be cut and available for students.

Lesson

“As human beings it is certain we will experience pain and suffering throughout our lives. Scientifically speaking our suffering- such as loneliness, anxiety, depression, and pain in all its forms, can do serious damage to our bodies all the way down to a cellular level.”

“But, there is always a silver lining. The silver lining of pain and suffering is that it can help us grow and learn and build our emotional strength, character, and resilience.

“Through our pain and suffering we can experience the compassion of others which builds connections and relationships. By simply establishing a connection to others through compassion, love, and kindness we are already improving our physical and emotional well being.”

“With lots of research, scientists have proven that compassion not only helps us develop healthy relationships and connections with one another, but it also makes our bodies stronger and improves our overall well being. There are quite a few benefits to compassion.”

“What have you noticed when you show compassion or kindness to someone? What impact does that have on the other person? What impact does that have on you? Does it change the world around you? In what ways?” Allow for class discussion and reflection.

“Let’s focus on having fun while practicing compassion. Today’s activity will be centered on random acts of kindness. These acts may be small, simple, and easy but they have a very powerful impact. These little acts can create a ripple effect that spread kindness and compassion far and wide.”

Hand out a strip of paper to each student and instruct each student to write down one random act of kindness that can be accomplished before the school day is over. Examples could include things like smiling, 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 things that are very do-able.

Gather the ideas, mix them up, and then go around and let students pick one slip. Students must then complete their action by the end of the day. They must at least do the act once, but encourage them to do it more than once. Pose the following questions:

- What impact do you think your act of kindness will have on others?
- What benefit will you get from this?
- What ripple effect might be started?

“Today is our last lesson before the culminating activity in the Choose Love Program, but our learning and growing is not over. We will continue to learn how to practice courage, gratitude, forgiveness, and compassion in action. We will continue to learn how to be our best selves. Remember we can’t always choose what happens to us, but we can always choose how we respond. We can always respond in positive, loving ways. I hope you’ll continue to follow the Choose Love Formula and always try to Choose Love!”

Call To Action

Gandhi said, “You cannot shake hands with a clenched fist.”

When we are feeling like the closed fist, it makes it hard to feel good about ourselves and the world around us. With a closed fist mindset, it is very difficult to engage and interact at all or positively with others. A closed fist signifies hate, anger, negativity and disconnect.

Trace your open hand on a piece of paper. All over your hand, write ways that you can interact with others and the world around you with an open hand, rather than a closed fist. How can you effectively deal with challenging feelings so that you are not angry and closed off from others?



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 Certificates of Completion 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 7 | 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:

Take A Seat; Make A Friend

Educator Prep

Preview/cue video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfHV4-N2LxQ>

Activity

“Today we are going to do a little activity to help us get better connected with others. We can show compassion to anyone, even complete strangers and people that we are completely different from. But when we can find common ground, we find connection which makes it easier to get to know and understand others and show compassion to them. Having the courage to reach out to get to know someone and finding common ground creates and strengthens connections and is part of practicing compassion.

“Let’s watch a video from Soul Pancake called ‘Take a Seat, Make a Friend’.” Show the following video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfHV4-N2LxQ>

“Pretty cool, right? These complete strangers got to know each other, connect, and even find common ground, by stepping out of their comfort zone to talk with a stranger and ask/answer random questions that were on the balls in the ball pit. Would you have gotten into the ball pit? Why or Why Not?

“I’d like you to write down three random questions on a piece of paper, just like some of the questions that were on the balls. For instance, what is on your bucket list? What do you like to do? What is important to you? How do you like to spend your free time? Think of some interesting questions.”

“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 asking them one of your questions. Ask your questions back and forth until you’ve asked and answered 3 questions each. Try to learn something new about a classmate and 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. It will

be fun to find out more about each other. And 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, your common ground, your connections, and anything cool or interesting that you learned about them. 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

Social awareness

Relationship skills

EXTENSION LESSON 3:

Building Bridges

Educator Prep

Prepare/distribute the *Building Bridges Through Empathy & Compassion* digital worksheet.

Activity

“We’ve been talking about the importance of empathy. Empathy creates connections and in doing so, it builds bridges and strengthens relationships. Having empathy and being empathetic is a way of relating to others.

“When we practice having empathy, we feel with others and understand how they feel. We may even imagine how that may feel if it happened to us. Having empathy like this is the gateway to compassion.

“Some say you can show compassion without having empathy. But really you have to recognize, identify with, and accept another’s pain, hurt and suffering.... this is the catalyst that pushes you to want to do something to alleviate that hurt and pain. Then you get your brain involved and start thinking about how you can take action.

“With compassion in action, you not only feel with others and take their perspective, but you then have the desire to help and to make their situation better.

“Today I’d like us to flex our empathy and compassion muscles. We need to make them stronger.” Reference Building Bridges digital worksheet.

“With a partner, I’d like you to brainstorm some different ways that you can show empathy and compassion to others. Then, I’d like you to write these down on your bridges, brick by brick; stone by stone.. The more the better. Think of the things you can say and do to show empathy and compassion. What does that look like and sound like? After you have ‘built your bridges’, decorate them.”

Allow time for students to create their bridges. You may invite students to share some of their ideas and their bridges.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness, Self-management, Social awareness, Relationship skills, Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 4:

Compassion Music

Educator Preparation

You may wish to pre-assign partners for this activity.

Preview and cue the following music video of the song, 'One' by U2. There are other versions of this song that you could substitute. This selection is a collaboration with Mary J. Blige. <https://youtu.be/ZpDQJnl4OhU>

You may wish to share other songs with students that are inspiring, feel good songs that relate to compassion and choosing love. Perhaps you have some personal favorites to share.

Other songs that you may wish to share include: • 'Man in the Mirror'- Michael Jackson • 'What a Wonderful World'- Louis Armstrong • 'Lean on Me'- Bill Withers • 'Stand by Me'- Ben E. King • 'I'll Stand by You'- The Pretenders • 'Everybody Hurts'- REM • 'Try a Little Kindness'- Performed by Brad Paisley • 'Brother's Keeper'- India Arie • 'Anytime You Need a Friend'- Mariah Carey • 'Compassion (Change the World)'- Andrew Witt • 'If Everyone Cared'- Nickelback • 'Imagine'- John Lennon • 'Speak Love'- Toby Mac

Activity

"We've been talking about the power of words and how they can greatly impact us. They can have an effect on our thoughts, feelings, mood and mindset. Raise your hand if you listen to music?"

"Keep your hand up if you listen to more than one type of music? Anyone have the courage to tell the class one of your favorite songs?"

"Music is one of the more magical things in the world. Not only are there hundreds if not thousands of styles and genres, it is cross-cultural- something that all different people can enjoy."

“Music speaks to us either through lyrics or the sound and can invoke many different feelings in us. It can really make us feel better or feel good just listening to a song. It can be comforting and healing and it is actually scientifically proven to reduce stress.”

“In an article written for psychcentral.com called, ‘The Power of Music to Reduce Stress’, author Jane Collingwood tells us that when we are stressed we are more likely to avoid listening to music as a coping strategy. But, when we are productive and actively engaged in listening to our music our stress levels decrease.” (Collingwood, 2016)

“Any music that you enjoy and that makes you feel calm, happy, relaxed, excited or just plain good can reduce stress. But this article also stresses the importance of listening to softer music such as classical which can help to slow your pulse, heart rate, lower blood pressure and reduce stress hormones.

“Let’s listen to a song right now and see how it makes us feel.”

Play the song, ‘One’ by U2: <https://youtu.be/ZpDQJnl4OhU>

“The song you just heard is called, ‘One’ and it’s by the band U2. This version is extra special because Mary J. Blige accompanied U2 on the song. What did you think of that song? How did it make you feel?

“I think it has a nice, peaceful, soothing vibe and sound. But the lyrics are inspiring as well. Let me read some of them to you:

One love, One blood

One life, You got to do what you should

One life with each other

Sisters, Brothers

One life, but we're not the same

We get to Carry each other

Carry each other One... One love

“What is the message? How do you think these lyrics express compassion in action? Can you apply these lyrics to a time in your life? Why do you think the song writer kept repeating the word ‘ONE’?”

“There are lots of songs and music that can make us feel calm and reduce our stress. As we talked about before, there are songs that can bring us courage and inspire and motivate us in different ways. Both the music and the lyrics can have an effect on us.”

“I’d like you to find a partner and discuss music together. What types of songs are on your playlists? What is your favorite song right now? What are your favorite lyrics from a song and why? Name a song that has deep meaning for you either because you associate it with someone or a moment in time, or maybe because you like the message in the lyrics. Discuss this with a partner and reflect in your journals.”

Allow time for students to discuss and reflect. Then, you can bring it back to a larger class discussion. **“Now I’d like you to create a playlist of songs you can listen to that make you feel happy and those that remind you of having compassion and choosing love. Think of songs with healing, soothing sounds or vocals with lyrics that express a positive and inspiring message.”**

Time permitting and as an extra challenge, you may invite students to try writing their own lyrics. They can even create their own inspiring lyrics to replace those in one of their favorite songs.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness, Self-management, Social awareness, Relationship skills, Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 5:

The Ripple Effect

Educator Prep

- Write the following quote on the board:
I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples. – Mother Theresa
- Preview and cue the following video that illustrates the ripple effect:
<https://youtu.be/PT-HBI2TVtI>
- Prepare/distribute the *My Ripple Effect* digital worksheet.
- 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.

Activity

“Let’s start today by taking a Mindful Minute. Find a comfortable position to sit. Close your eyes and focus your attention on your favorite body of water for one minute.”

“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.”

“I’ve written a quote on the board by Mother Theresa. Copy this into your journals and let’s think about it for a minute. What do you think? Do you agree? Why or why not?”

“Let’s watch a video on this ripple effect.” Show the following video to students which illustrates the ripple effect: <https://youtu.be/PT-HBI2TVtI>.

After viewing the video, ask students to answer the following questions in their journals:

1. How did the video make you feel?

2. What was the message of the video?
3. Describe the ripple effect in your own words?
4. 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?
5. What's a bigger thing you can do?
6. How might that impact others?
7. How will that affect you?

Ask for some volunteers to share their responses to some of these questions. You may open this up for class discussion and reflection.

Now, reference the My Ripple Effect worksheet. **"In the smallest center circle, 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.

"Remember, we have a lot of power and control to be able to choose how we act and interact with others every moment of every day. While we can't always choose what happens to us, we can always choose how we respond....and we can choose to act with compassion and love. This is a lot of power we have and with that comes a big responsibility. We must think carefully about the decisions, choices, and responses we make and try to consider the impact they will have on others. As the Dalai Lama said, 'everything you do has some effect, some impact'. What effect will you have? What impact will you make? What ripples will you create?"

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness, Self-management, Social awareness, Relationship skills, Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 6:

You Are Meant To Shine

Educator Prep

Display or read out loud the 'negative self-judgement' examples outlined below.

Activity

"We've talked about the inner critic that we have. Sometimes the inner critic is just being mean and sometimes what the inner critic says is not true. But there is a voice inside us that is our inner protector or inner inspirer.

"That voice may give us criticism to keep safe. Or it may point out some weaknesses to inspire us to grow. We don't want to be constantly down on ourselves and constantly criticizing ourselves and pointing out where we fall short. But it is healthy to assess yourself critically sometimes as long as you pair it with compassion.

"When we self-assess, we are evaluating ourselves- our actions, reactions, choices, and inspirations. Assessing these things by looking inward in this way can help you grow and strive to be better than you were yesterday. That should be your goal.....not to be perfect, but to just be a little better than you were yesterday and applaud yourself for that.

"However, when we self-assess by making negative judgments about ourselves, it can become very self-destructive. Negative self-judgment can mean you are overly hard on yourself, you dwell on the negative, and you give yourself little credit for the positive. It is important to balance being critical of yourself with love and kindness towards yourself.

"Take out your notebook and write down 5 negative judgments about yourself. Then cross off each one and turn the negative self-judgment into a compassionate criticism that you can accept, learn, and grow from.

“Here are some are some examples to help you get started.”

Display and/or read out loud the examples below.

- Negative Self-Judgment: I am so shy, I bet no one even knows I’m in the room.
- Compassionate Criticism: Because I am shy and don’t talk much that makes me a great listener! But perhaps I can have the courage to step outside my comfort zone at least once every day.

- Negative Self-Judgment: My legs are so fat. I bet everyone is noticing that I’m gaining weight.
- Compassionate Criticism: I’ve been stress eating since my dad moved out of the house. I want to be healthy so I can achieve all of my goals. Next time I want to stress eat I am going to go for a walk instead. Going for a walk will help get me some fresh air, clear my head and improve my health.

- Negative Self-Judgment: I was the only one in the entire class who failed the test. I’m so stupid and I can’t get anything right!!!
- Compassionate Criticism: Even though I failed the test, I know I tried my best and that sometimes falling short is part of life. Failing is an opportunity for me to learn and grow. What could I do differently next time? I am going to come up with a plan to help me better prepare for the next test.

Share these examples and then allow time for students to practice reframing their negative self judgements to compassionate criticisms. You may wish to invite students to share some of these.

“Let’s end this list on a positive note. I’d like you to draw a large star in the middle of your paper. In the center write a goal you have for your future. In each of the 5 points I’d like you to write something different.

“In the first point, write something you like about the way you look. Second point, write your best character trait. Third point, write your best talent. Fourth point, write your greatest strength. Fifth point, write what makes you shine...how you are unique and special.

“After you have completed this, decorate your star so it is uniquely you. Just like no two fingerprints are alike, there are no two stars that have exactly the same properties- each one is unique. Each of you are stars.... you just have to remember that and remember to

shine! As a star you are special. Your job isn't to be perfect but simply to shine a little brighter and be a little bit better you every day."

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

EXTENSION LESSON 7:

Coping Skills

Educator Preparation

Prepare/distribute *60 Positive Coping Skills* digital worksheet.

Activity

“We want to show empathy and compassion to others. But it is so important that we take the time to show love, kindness, and understanding to ourselves because it enables us to do this for others.

“Showing kindness, love and compassion to yourself can be done in many different ways. Here are some of the most important ways you can start showing compassion to yourself.

- **living a healthy lifestyle and taking care of ourselves**
- **embracing and accepting our weaknesses and faults and celebrating our strengths**
- **failing forward or accepting our mistakes and setbacks and learning and growing from them instead of beating ourselves up over them**
- **having a positive attitude and practicing gratitude**
- **forgiving ourselves and others.**

“Part of our experience as human beings means we will encounter times when we make mistakes, suffer a great loss, become fearful, fall short of our expectations, get knocked down, experience pain. The comforting thing is that all humans experience these ‘bumps in the road’ of life.....we are not alone. What separates us is how we each choose to react.

“We have the choice to respond to our ‘bumps in the road’ in healthy ways rather than negative ways such as self-criticism, hurtful actions towards ourselves and others, and disconnection from others.

“The next time you are experiencing a ‘bump in the road,’ before you react, stop and think. Remind yourself that all people experience difficulties in life and that you will be ok and that this will pass. Ask yourself, ‘will this matter in a week, in a month, in a year?’. Step outside of your pain and redirect your focus to show yourself some kindness just like you would to others experiencing pain and difficulty.

“I am going to read a few lines from the book, ‘You’re Here For a Reason’ by Nancy Tillman.

‘Life can be tricky, there isn’t a doubt. You’ll skin your knees trying to figure it out. But life works together, the good and the bad, The silly and awful, the happy and sad, To paint a big picture we can’t always see... A picture that needs you, most definitely. Remember that next time a day goes all wrong.... To somebody else, You will always be strong.’

“What do you think of these words? How do they inspire you?” Allow for reflection.

“Let’s discover some ways that we can show compassion to ourselves, to help us be strong and cope with the challenges of life. I am going to pass out a list of 60 Positive Coping Skills. I’d like you to read through them and then circle those that you think would be helpful to you. At the bottom of the list, add some more ways that you can cope with challenging situations in healthy ways and show self-compassion.”

Allow time for students to work on this. After they can get with a partner and brainstorm some additional things to add to the list.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness, Self-management, Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 8:

Once Upon A Time

Educator Prep

None.

Activity

“As we talk about compassion, it’s helpful to remind ourselves of the times when others have shown compassion to us and how that affected us.

“Sometimes, we can caught up in negativity, constantly playing back situations or moments when others have hurt or wronged us in some way. When we focus on these things, it leaves little room for us to think about positive interactions and moments.

“Remember it takes courage and an attitude of gratitude to focus on the positive. But we have to constantly rewire our brain for positivity. This allows us to be in a place in our mind and heart where we can truly connect with others in healthy, meaningful ways.....giving and receiving love and compassion.

“When we can do this, we reinforce these positive neural pathways which changes our mindset, the way we feel, the way we interact.....we greatly benefit and so do those around us!

“Recall a time when someone showed you compassion, whether it was in a big way or a small way. How did it make you feel when you were treated with kindness and understanding? What impact did their kindness and compassion have on you? Why do you think the person showed kindness to you? How do you think it made the person feel to show kindness?

“Let’s have some fun and write about this moment as if it were a fairy tale. Start with ‘Once upon a time....’ and continue creating this fairy tale based on this compassionate act that was bestowed on you. Make this story grand and full of detail and emotion. After we create these true fairy tales of compassion, I’ll invite some of you to share them with the class.”

Give students time to write and allow for some students to share with the larger group or in small groups.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 9:

Queen Rania of Jordan

Educator Prep

- You may wish to allow students to research more on [Queen Rania of Jordan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_Rania_of_Jordan) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_Rania_of_Jordan) and share their findings with the class, either as an in class or out of class/extra credit assignment.
- Prepare a photo of her to reference during the lesson.

Activity

“I’d like to introduce you to Queen Rania of Jordan, a real life Queen. Her Majesty became Queen of Jordan, a country in the Middle East, in March of 1999.

“Jordan is a peaceful place that is surrounded by many countries torn by war and terrorism, such as Iraq, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Syria. Instead of spending her days enclosed behind palace doors with every luxury at her fingertips, Her Majesty chooses to spend most of her time advocating for others.

“The Queen is famous for her work on bringing compassion and justice to an area of the world infamously associated with injustice, violence and the mistreatment of women. She is famous for her work on bridging the gap between cultures and showing her leadership as an empathetic role model. She is opening up dialogue between her corner of the world and other countries by using compassion in action so that others may rid themselves of Arab or Muslim stereotypes and judgments.

“Queen Rania works as a voice of the Jordanian people, but mostly for the children. Her Majesty worked to create a foundation called The Queen Rania Foundation for Education and Development to ensure all children of Jordan receive a proper education with modern technology and resources connecting these classrooms to similar ones all over the world. (Rania, 2016)

“The following is a quote from Queen Rania (Rania, 2016):

‘Perhaps if we all subscribed to the African concept of Ubuntu - that we all become people through other people, and that we cannot be fully human alone, we could learn a lot. There’d be less hatred and more harmony.’

“What do you think of this quote from Queen Rania? What do you think she means? Do you agree? Why or why not?” Allow for reflection and response.

“Turn to a partner and share how you think Queen Rania is a role model for compassion.”

Allow a few minutes for partners to discuss. Then allow for the sharing of responses with the larger class.

“Ok, now imagine you are the King or Queen of a nation. Just like Queen Rania, how would you become a role model for compassion? What would you do? What would be your mission and goals? What would your quote be, your motto or words to live by and inspire others?”

Allow time for students to write down their thoughts and ideas and then invite some students to share. You may wish to allow students to research more on Queen Rania of Jordan and share their findings with the class, either as an in class or out of class/extra credit assignment.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 10 :

Ellen Degenerous

Educator Prep

Preview/cue to video on Ellen DeGeneres: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atNiYtCTcPc>

Activity

“Ellen DeGeneres is most famous for her daytime talk show ELLEN which has won countless Emmy Awards. But did you know Ellen is also a major advocate for tolerance and diversity, for the Susan G. Komen for the Cure (breast cancer), for relief aid, and for the fair and ethical treatment of animals? Ellen is also famous for being one of the most charitable celebs in pop culture.

“Humanitarians are people who dedicate themselves to improving the lives of others. Ellen was named ‘Favorite Humanitarian’ at the People’s Choice Awards in 2016. She even chose to donate the \$200,000 monetary prize that accompanies the award to St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital whose mission is to help find a cure for cancer in children.

“Let’s watch a clip of Ellen winning her ‘Favorite Humanitarian Award’. Not only is Ellen changing lives and inspiring others through compassion in action, she is making people laugh while doing it (EllenShow, 2015)!”

Show the following clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atNiYtCTcPc>

“What do you think about her speech? What stood out to you? How were you inspired by Ellen?” Allow for reflection and discussion.

“Who is your favorite humanitarian or compassion role model? Is there a celebrity or famous person that you know who does a lot to help others. Or maybe this person isn’t famous, they are just a regular person doing extraordinary things who should be recognized. In your journal, write about who they are and why you chose that person. What qualities about this person are inspiring?”

Allow students a few minutes to write about their compassion role models. Afterwards, have students share with the larger class.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness, Social awareness

EXTENSION LESSON 11 :

HIS HOLINESS THE 14TH DALAI LAMA OF TIBET

Educator Prep

- You may wish to allow students to research more on the [Dalai Lama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dalai_Lama) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dalai_Lama) either as part of this lesson or as an out of class assignment.
- Prepare a picture to share as part of the lesson.

Activity

“Tibet is a tiny region in China, but has the highest elevation on the entire planet. In Tibet, you will find the tallest structure in the entire world, Mount Everest, and one of the most kind and compassionate individuals, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet.

“Tibetan Buddhist followers believe His Holiness is the Bodhisattva of Compassion and the patron saint of Tibet.

“It’s significant to know that The Dalai Lama is not only important in a religious context but many of his talks are secular, which means they are not based on religion. His Holiness is well-known for his teachings of compassion in action and his message transcends race, religion, ethnicity, location, age and beliefs.

“He travels the world holding public talks that focus on Buddhist meditation and teachings, however he also travels the world as a humanitarian and raises important issues and concerns for ALL humans such as the need for empathy and compassion in modern day society.

“If you are curious to learn more about The Dalai Lama from a secular (or non-religious) point of view, you will find plenty of information. On his website DalaiLama.com, His Holiness details ‘Three Main Commitments’ in his role as Dalai Lama of Tibet (Lama, 2016).

“His Holiness’ first commitment is the promotion of human values such as compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, contentment and self-discipline. All human beings are the same. We all want happiness and do not want suffering. Even people who do not believe in religion recognize the importance of these human values in making their life happier (Lama, 2016).

“If you had to create ‘Three Main Commitments’ that represent your core principles, like the Dalai Lama of Tibet, what would they be?”

“What are your commitments to life? What do you think is most important? What words or messages do you want to direct your feelings, thoughts, words, actions and life and that of others?”

“Think about your core values as you write these. Your core values are your strongest beliefs, your guiding principles that steer your behaviors. Write your ‘Three Main Commitments’ in your journal.”

Allow time for students to write their commitments. Afterwards, invite students to share them. You can make a list on the board of some key messages, words, and ideas.

“After hearing some of your classmates ideas for commitments, do you feel differently? If you have different commitments you’d like to write or if you want to add more than the three, you can do so now. Keep these in a place where you can see them to inspire and motivate you to be a compassion role model...let them shape your mindset and attitude, guide your responses and choices, and help you to be your best self.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 12 :

Elie Wiesel

Educator Prep

Preview/cue video about Elie Wiesel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Igj870VMts>.

Activity

“Elie Wiesel is one of the most famous survivors in the world. At the age of 15, Elie was ripped from his home in Sighet, Romania and transported to the Nazi concentration camps.

“Elie and his family were targeted by the Nazi’s because they were Jewish. For years, Elie and his father were tortured by Nazi soldiers. They were forced to work in the camps with little food and grotesque living conditions.

“In Elie’s book 'Night', which has been translated into over 30 different languages, he talks about the horrors witnessed within the camps, the human atrocities that occurred from hatred and intolerance of others. Elie talks about seeing people he knew his whole life perish, and children being murdered right before his very own eyes. These sights of hatred, violence, and intolerance stuck with Elie his entire life and inspired him to initiate change.

“The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity, an organization he and his wife created to fight indifference, intolerance, and injustice, was born from the hatred and agony he endured within the camps. Elie knew the power within his message of love, compassion and tolerance for others so he used it to help change the perspective of so many in the world. Elie spent the rest of his life advocating for the rights of human beings and has won countless awards such as the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal, the National Humanities Medal, the Medal of Liberty, and most notably, the Nobel Peace Prize (Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity, 2016). (Source: <http://www.eliewieselfoundation.org/eliewiesel.aspx>)

“Let’s watch a video of Elie Wiesel and Oprah Winfrey. Together the two visited Auschwitz Concentration Camp. This was Elie’s first visit back to the concentration camp since he was there with his father during World War II.”

Show the following video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lgjj870VMts>

“In your journal, write down the first thoughts and feelings that come to mind after viewing this video and hearing Elie Wiesel’s story.” Invite students to share their thoughts and feelings.

“Can you think of ways you can practice tolerance in your life? What are some ways you can honor the teachings of Elie Wiesel? Have you ever been in a situation where someone treated you with intolerance? How did it make you feel? How can you stop someone from treating others with intolerance? Reflect on these questions in your journals.”

Allow students to share their responses/reflections with a partner, in small groups, or as a class.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 13:

Ah, There You Are

Educator Prep

- Put the following quote on the board:
 - *There are two types of people- those who come in the room and say, 'Here I Am' and those who come in the room and say, 'Ah, there you are'. - Frederick Collins*
- Break the class into 4 small groups.
- Have poster board or chart paper available for groups to make their top ten lists to share with the class.
- Have 4 index cards with the words: Including Others, Dealing with Bullying, Solving Conflicts Peacefully, and Being a Good Friend.

Activity

“Look at the quote I have on the board while I read it to you. ‘There are two types of people- those who come in the room and say, ‘Here I am’ and those who come in the room and say, ‘Ah, there you are.’”

“What do you think it means? Do you agree? Why or why not? Which type of person do you want to be? Can you be both? How?” Allow for responses and discussion.

“Today we are going to practice being the type of person that says, ‘Ah, there you are’. That means we are going to take the time to step outside ourselves and show kindness and compassion for others.

“We can do that by having empathy and considering how we can better connect with others in positive, meaningful ways. In doing so, we improve the lives of others as well as improving our own lives and spread happiness and love.

“I am going to break you up into groups. Each group is going to be given an ‘assignment’. That is, you will be working as a group to brainstorm ways in which you can show compassion to solve a problem that may create disconnection among our peers.

“We want this class, this school, and the larger community to be a compassionate place where people feel connected, included, engaged, and compassionate towards one another.

“So one group will be coming up with ways to help others feel included. One group will be coming up with ways that others can resolve conflicts peacefully and happily. One group will be coming up with ways to be a good, true friend. Another group will be brainstorming ways to deal with bullying.

“Your group will get one of those problems or situations and you will brainstorm solutions to that problem. How can you show compassion and choose love in these instances? What positive difference can you make? What are some tips for others? You will brainstorm some ideas....come up with your top ten ideas....and then share them with the class.”

Allow time for groups to work on their lists and write them on chart paper. Then groups will take turns sharing ideas. Have students take notes on the ideas to handle each situation with compassion and love.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 14:

I Was Here

Educator Prep

Preview and cue the following video, 'I Was Here' by Beyonce:

<https://youtu.be/i41qWJ6QjPI>

Activity

“Let’s start today by taking a Mindful Minute. Get comfortable and close your eyes. For a minute, focus your attention on your goals and dreams for the future.

“It’s exciting to think about what lies ahead...what you’re future may bring. But all of that depends on right here and now. You are planting the seeds for your future and the future for other generations. What a great responsibility and what power comes with that.....you are in control of this destiny...and that’s very exciting! Today I want you to embrace this responsibility, this power, this control, this future, this destiny. Let’s watch the following video of international superstar Beyonce’s performance at the United Nations World Humanitarian Day. The song she performs in this video is called, ‘I Was Here’.”

Show the following video: <https://youtu.be/i41qWJ6QjPI>

“This is a very powerful song that talks about the mark she wants to leave on this world. Towards the middle of the song she delivers a set of inspiring lines that I think are very important to remember:

I just want them to know That I gave my all, did my best
Brought someone to happiness
Left this world a little better just because I was here.

“Right now I’d like you to open your journals and respond to this video and song. How does it make you feel? How does it inspire you? What stood out to you? What do you want people to remember you by? Do you give your all and do your best? What happiness do you and can you bring to others? How can you leave this world a better place? What can you do right now to give your best, bring happiness to others, and leave this world a better place? How do you show, ‘I Was Here’? Reflect on this in your journals. As you do, be reminded of the importance of this moment. Be reminded of how your choices do

matter. Be reminded that you can and will make a difference. Be reminded of how important you are!”

You may invite students to share some reflections and responses with the larger group, in small groups, or with partners.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 15:

Choose Love Portrait

Educator Prep

Have a copy of 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 earlier in the year. 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 larger group. After each person shares, give them a round of applause.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management