



Choose Love For Schools™

Grade 8

Compilation of All Lessons in All Units



Grade 8|COURAGE

Grade 8, 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



LESSON 1:

Discovering Courage

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Define courage.
- Generate examples for small and large acts of courage.
- Create a word association for the term courage.
- Cite the benefits of practicing courage mentally, physically and emotionally.

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

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

Educator Prep

- Preview the word association activity and prepare to share your own example with the group during the lesson.
- You may choose to digitize your word association using the site: <https://wordart.com/create>
- Write 'Benefits of Courage' on the board. Make three columns with these words: Mental, Physical, Emotional

Lesson

“Now that we’re ready to get out of our comfort zones and grow, we will start our first unit at the beginning of the Choose Love Formula: courage. 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 lives.”

“What are some other words you think of when you think of courage?” Responses may include: brave, superhero, fearless, help, support, protect, guide, strong, etc.

“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.”

“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. For example: Scoring in the last minutes of a game, asking a teacher for help, standing up to a bully, welcoming a new student, taking a test, trying out for a team or play, standing up for someone being teased, performing in front of an audience, learning something new, solving conflicts peacefully, making a new friend, sharing your opinion/honest feelings about something, etc.

“We are going to do an activity called, ‘Word Up’. We are going to start by writing the word ‘Courage’ in your journal. When I say go, I want you to think of the first word that comes to your mind and write it underneath Courage. Then, think of the next word that comes to mind from the 2nd word and write that underneath your second word. We will continue on like this for 8 words. After we’ve written 8 words, we’ll go back and add words before and after the word you wrote down...in this way, you are adding content and depth, shaping your poem.”

“Let’s take a few minutes to do this. Start with the word, ‘Courage’ and flow from there, word after word after word.....quickly writing the first word that comes to mind after each word. Be spontaneous and creative - express your thoughts and feelings freely, let your mind make its own connections. Then, use your words as the base for your poem...fill in the blanks, expand upon these starting words.” Allow students to create their poems.

“Let me show you mine.” Write the following words on the board using arrows to connect the words from top to bottom to show how one word stemmed from the preceding word:

Courage

Hope

Belief

Faith

Strength

Confidence

Me

Happiness

“I added words before and after these words to fill out my poem.”

COURAGE

I have HOPE for today,

BELIEF in all that is good.

My FAITH will stand firm.

I find STRENGTH through my struggles.

My CONFIDENCE shines brightly,

The light is ME.

HAPPINESS is my choice.

Students may choose to share their poems after you share yours.

“Did you know that people who overcome their fears and show courage are happier and healthier?”

“Courage has many benefits. When we know the benefits of something, we are more likely to do it. When we know that there are physical, mental, and emotional benefits of being courageous, we’ll be more likely to practice courage on a daily basis. It also feels good to act courageously. How do you feel after having acted courageously? 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.

"Today we've gotten a better idea of what courage is. 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."

Call to Action

Make an infographic (a drawing with information, like a cartoon) with the benefits of courage and share it with someone you know. [Canva](https://www.canva.com/) offers a free online graphic design platform and has a variety of Infographic templates the students could customize.



EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY:

I Choose Love

Display the following poem for the class. Read it aloud.

I CHOOSE LOVE

By Maithri Goonetilleke

(Goonetilleke, 2008)

So many roads, so many choices, and it seems like I've chosen them all in this short life.

Sometimes, many times, I've chosen pain - sometimes immediate, sometimes remembered, always real.

I chose to let it sting me like the barbs of a nettle or an old wire fence.

I chose to bleed. I chose to let the CD player of my mind run on one track all day - trying to hurt away the hurt.

Many times I chose fear, chose to shrink away from the world cloaked only in thoughts of disapproval, of not being good enough.

But today, I have no time for pain. I have no time for fear. Don't get me wrong. It's not because there are not things to hurt about or people who will disapprove. But because I know now, that there is ALWAYS another road. A road which I would much rather walk.

So today I choose peace. I choose to not judge the world, the people in it or the things that happen to me as good or bad. But simply to know that on a far deeper level than I can ever be aware - I am safe. I am held. I am worthy.

I choose to honour my body. Not only with good food, mindful eating, and exercise. But also to remember that we are sensual beings. I will comfort my eyes by finding something beautiful in each thing I see. I will caress the world with my hands, make love to it with my words, embrace it with my mind.

And throughout this day, I will continue to make life affirming choices.

I choose to dance, to let joy take me over completely and not worry for one moment about the ones who might see or judge.

I choose to breathe. I choose to breathe life in and to let it breathe me in.

I choose to laugh. Loud and long. At the world but mostly at myself for all the times I've taken life oh so seriously.

And most of all - I choose love. I choose to love myself. I choose to let friends and strangers become my love.

And when I walk into the world and see discord, I will look harder. I will look for beauty.

I will look for peace. And I will find it. And when I meet hatred, I will open my heart so wide and let the sea of my love wash over it - till it melts away.

And when I see a man, woman or child in pain (whomever they be) - I will use my life's energy to bring what healing I can. And if I cannot heal their pain, I will kneel down and wash their feet.

Today is a new day.

And I Choose Love.

“What does this mean to you? Are there any parts that really stand out for you? Why? Are there any parts that you can really relate to? In what ways? How does this poem make you feel? Take a minute to write down your thoughts and responses to these questions.”

Allow students a few minutes to express their thoughts and reactions to this poem in their journals. Then, get back to the larger group and pose these questions having students volunteer their thoughts, feelings, and reactions. Remember that students may be reluctant to share their thoughts and feelings because it's exposing themselves and that can make them feel vulnerable, uncomfortable, or perhaps embarrassed if they are not used to expressing themselves in this way. Be encouraging - praise them for their courage.

2

EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY:

Choose Love Constitution

“Today we are going to draft our very own Choose Love Constitution. A constitution is a document that we create together as a group, which defines 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.”

“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. Typical examples of classroom constitution rules include: treat each other with respect, the Golden Rule, 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?”

“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. In your journals, write down one part of the constitution that will be harder for you to follow. This should be something you pay close attention to.”

“It takes courage to discuss these subjects and to practice choosing love in our daily lives. We all have this courage within us. I want to applaud you in advance for this courage.”

Everything we do in these lessons is designed to make us stronger and more resilient individuals. It will help us build greater awareness and compassion for ourselves, others, and the world around us. To end today's lesson, let's draw a picture to represent what LOVE looks like to us. What does LOVE mean to you? How do you see LOVE? What words and pictures describe LOVE through your lens?"



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">➤ Understand the three parts of the brain and how they function.➤ Create a presentation of the brain hand model.➤ Review the different parts and characteristics of the triune brain.➤ Write affirmations to focus behaviors in a positive, courageous way.	<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➤ Relationship Skills➤ Responsible Decision Making

Educator Prep

- For more in-depth understanding of how our brains and bodies respond to fear, watch this video about the neuroscience behind the program. You can show this to your students for this lesson. [Dr. Chris Kukk on the Science of Choosing Love](https://safesha.re/hq1) (https://safesha.re/hq1)
- As an additional resource, watch leading researcher [Dr. Dan Siegel discusses the brain](https://safesha.re/hq2) (https://safesha.re/hq2).
- Here are a couple other good videos that explain the brain and hand model. These would be good to show to the class.
 - [Hand Model of the Brain for KIDS by Jeanette Yoffe](https://safesha.re/hq3) (https://safesha.re/hq3)
 - [Hand Model of the Brain Kid Friendly Explanation](https://safesha.re/hq4) (https://safesha.re/hq4)

Lesson

“Today we’re going to talk more about how our brains, hearts, and bodies can 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 angry, scared, anxious, or overwhelmed.”

“Has anyone ever been in a situation where they felt scared to do the right thing?” 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.

“Some degree of fear is always present when we act courageously. Fear, like every emotion, is normal and important. Courage is not the absence of fear - it’s a choice - it’s choosing to act even if you’re afraid. Our brains send our bodies signals about fear to keep us safe and protect us from danger. These automatic responses to potential threats are often called, ‘fight, flight, or freeze’ responses. Sometimes you might feel so scared that you want to fight back (fight), run away (flight), or shut down completely (freeze). Three parts of our brains work together to help us understand these instances. Let’s learn about the three parts of the brain: the reptilian, the mammalian, and the human brain.”

At this point you can show the Neuroscience video below. Make sure each student has a picture of the brain. [Dr. Chris Kukk on the Science of Choosing Love](#)

“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 the 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."

"WE make the choice of who (lizard, numbat or human) controls our actions in every situation. It's very empowering to know that each of us can choose which part of the brain we want to control our responses."

"Find a partner in the class and explain the hand model of the brain to them. Make sure you're able to label the three parts of the brain from the hand model and explain what each part does for your body. Don't forget to explain to your partner what it means when we "flip our lids!" Give each student in the group an opportunity to practice explaining the hand model.

Negative thoughts or judgements awaken the numbat. Positive self-talk can help nudge the numbat and calm us down. When we make the choice to change our thoughts, we can change how we feel, and be better able to make good decisions."

One way to practice positive self talk is to create affirmations for ourselves.

"What are some additional examples of affirmations?" Have students share some of their examples.

“To end our lesson today, I want you to create a positive affirmation that we could use when our numbat is awakened. We are going to “decorate” our walls with these affirmations as a reminder of our ability to choose how we respond to situations. Let’s see how many we can create to decorate our classroom!” You can use notecards, sentence strips, chart paper or strips of notebook paper for this activity. You can also allow students to color their affirmations as well if there is time!

Call to Action

Show the hand model to an adult in your home. Explain each part of the model like you did in class. You can also take some time to create affirmations with your family and friends. Posting them somewhere in your home as a visual reminder is a great idea. The more often you see them, the more likely you are to use them!



EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY:

Courage Pose

“We need to find some ways to leave the lizard and hug the human. We can do this by empowering ourselves and finding ways to boost our courage. One way to deal with feeling anxious, uncertain, and fearful and to strengthen our courage is to use a power pose. We may also call these brave poses or courage poses. A courage pose is a way of sitting or standing that increases your courage and confidence. It can empower you. It’s based on Amy Cuddy’s TED Talk about Power Posing. Posing in this way changes your body chemistry by increasing testosterone and lowering your cortisol levels. Testosterone is a hormone that makes you feel more dominant, more powerful and in control. Cortisol is a hormone that causes stress and anxiety. This change helps your brain and body move from fear to courage.”

“You want to create a pose where your body language is open and expanded. In yoga, you put your body into many different poses. One of these poses is called the five-pointed star and it is a pose that can be used as a power or courage pose. Stand up and let’s try it. Stand with your feet parallel. Spread your feet out about 3 feet wide. With your palms down, lift your arms to your sides so they are shoulder height. Keep your back straight and your head held high. You’ll notice you look like the shape of a star. And guess what? You are a star! This and other power poses can give you just the boost to give you courage and confidence to handle stressful feelings and situations.”

“Do you want to see my courage pose?” Show students what your pose looks like. It’s okay if you or your students feel uncomfortable doing this. Share your thoughts and feelings of discomfort, anxiety and the like so they can see how you move past these feelings in creating and sharing your pose.

“Just by looking at me, how would you say I am feeling? How would you describe me?”

Responses should include: happy, confident, courageous, powerful, strong, bold, important, etc.

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

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

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

“Typically, you might spread your feet, roll your shoulders back, lift your chin or head slightly, hold your arms wider than you normally do. You may have your hands on your hips and have yourself very firmly planted on the ground, looking much the way SuperMan or Wonder Woman look. But make this pose your own. Make sure your pose is open and your body is expanded, not closed off and shrunken. And don’t forget to smile! Try out a few different postures before deciding which one feels right and best to you. Make sure you can hold your pose for at least one minute without getting hurt or tired.”

After a few minutes....

“Let’s all practice our poses together. First we’ll try holding it for 15 seconds. Ready, Go!”

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

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

Teacher Tip: There is also a [TED Talk by Kelly McGonagle](https://www.ted.com/talks/kelly-mcgonagle-the-brave-pose) related to the brave pose:
<https://safesha.re/hq6>

2

EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY:

Mind in a Jar & The Four Pebbles

“We’ve been talking about ways to help us nudge the numbat to leave the lizard and hug the human . We know we need to keep our thoughts positive and inspiring because our thoughts can affect our feelings and then these thoughts and feelings affect our behaviors. We are going to watch a brief video that talks a little bit more about our minds, thoughts, and feelings.”

Show the following video, [‘Mind in a Jar’](https://safesha.re/hqh) (<https://safesha.re/hqh>)

“This video used a shaken jar of glitter as an analogy for our minds when we are stressed, angry, upset, anxious or scared.....when our minds are full of racing thoughts and feelings, particularly negative or challenging ones. It’s important to remember a few things.....first, we need to think about what we’re thinking about. Second, we need to keep our thoughts positive. Last, we need to calm ourselves when we are overwhelmed by our thoughts and feelings. This video showed a simple way to calm ourselves. By taking deep breaths and focusing on the glitter settling, we can settle ourselves, calming our minds, hearts and bodies. This is a mindfulness exercise. In upcoming classes, we are going to be learning several mindfulness techniques to help us to be happy, calm, positive, and strong.”

“Today, we’re going to finish with another mindfulness activity to help replace our negative thoughts with positive ones. Thich Nhat Hahn, a Zen Master, Author, and Nobel Peace Prize nominee created the 4 Pebble Meditation which has you use 4 stones to focus your attention on 4 different thoughts associated with a flower, a mountain, water, and space. We are going to use these 4 things to change our thoughts today from negative to positive. We are going to move from a place of worry and fear to a place of calm and courage.”

“The first thing to be mindful of is the flower. We say ‘I feel fresh as the flower’.That means you feel beautiful, energetic, playful, and happy. The second thing to be mindful of is the mountain. We say ‘I feel as solid as the mountain’. This means you are confident, courageous and strong. The third thing to be mindful of is the water. We say ‘I feel still as the water’. This means you are quiet, calm and peaceful with a clear, focused, reflecting

mind. The fourth thing is space. We say 'I am as free as space'. This means you are relaxed and free of worry, anxiety, fear, sadness or anger."

"I would like you to complete the 'Four Pebbles Reflection' Worksheet by finishing the sentences with words and a reflective drawing. Describe the people, things, places and activities that make you feel fresh as the flower, solid as the mountain, still as the water, and free as space. You can do this activity anytime you need to clear your mind, gather your focus, and replace negative energy with positive energy. You can write these sentences, state these mantras or affirmations, or use them as part of a breathing meditation. We are going to talk more about meditation in an upcoming lesson. But for starters, you can simply close your eyes and breathe in and out repeating and focusing on the following words."

"Breathing in I am the FLOWER, Breathing out I feel FRESH.

Breathing in I am the MOUNTAIN, Breathing out I feel SOLID.

Breathing in I am STILL WATER, Breathing out I feel CALM.

Breathing in I am SPACE, breathing out I feel FREE."

THE FOUR PEBBLES REFLECTION

1. I feel FRESH as the FLOWER.

I feel happy, energetic, playful and vibrant when:

(describe when you feel this way and draw a reflection picture that relates)

2. I feel SOLID as the MOUNTAIN.

I feel courageous, confident, secure, and strong when:

(describe when you feel this way and draw a reflection picture that relates)

3. I feel STILL as the WATER.

I feel calm, focused, quiet and reflective when:

(describe when you feel this way and draw a reflection picture that relates)

4. I feel FREE as SPACE.

I feel open, relaxed, and light when:

(describe when you feel this way and draw a reflection picture that relates)

Breathing in I am the FLOWER, Breathing out I feel FRESH.

**Breathing in I am the MOUNTAIN, Breathing out I feel SOLID.
Breathing in I am STILL WATER, Breathing out I feel CALM.
Breathing in I am SPACE, breathing out I feel FREE.**



LESSON 3:

Nudging the Numbat

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ List the benefits of meditation and mindfulness.➤ Generate positive affirmation statements.➤ Practice guided meditation.	<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➤ Relationship Skills➤ Responsible Decision Making

Educator Prep

- Preview and cue the following videos
 - [Mindfulness Animated in 3 Minutes](https://safesha.re/hqi) (https://safesha.re/hqi)
 - [3 Minute Body Scan Meditation](https://safesha.re/hqi) (https://safesha.re/hqi)
- List the following 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

Lesson

“Last class we talked about the three parts of our brain and our ‘fight or flight’ response to fear. Today we are going to talk about how we can nudge our numbat when negative thoughts enter our mind.”

“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.”

“Today we are going to learn about two different ways to focus our thoughts and attention, and to choose our thoughts, letting go of any that don’t serve us well. They are called affirmations and mindfulness.”

“An affirmation is a statement we repeat to ourselves to help us focus our attention on something we want to do, think or feel.

“Here is one of my favorite affirmations - ‘I am in charge of how I feel today and I choose happiness.’”

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

- I am in charge of how I feel today, and I choose happiness.
- I am in control of me.
- I am courageous.
- I can handle anything that comes my way.
- I face difficult situations with courage.
- I am calm and at peace.
- I am in control of my thoughts, feelings and actions.
- I choose happiness.
- I will choose love.
- I have the strength and love to stand up for what is right.
- I have important ideas to share.
- I will do my best today.
- I have the courage and ability to face any challenge.
- I choose positive thoughts over negative thoughts.
- I am strong and full of courage.

“Affirmations can help us overcome fear. They can help us be in control of our thoughts and feelings and set our intentions in a courageous and positive way.”

“Let’s create our own personal power playlist...write down at least 5 affirmations that you can run through your mind to boost your confidence and courage and to help you reach your goals.”

Allow students to pick from affirmations mentioned before, or they can come up with their own. You may want to give students an opportunity to share one affirmation they chose or created and when they think they may use it in their daily life.

“Another strategy is mindfulness. Mindfulness is basically thinking about thinking. It’s paying attention on purpose to the here and now. We’re going to watch a short video on mindfulness.”

Show the following video, [“Mindfulness Animated in 3 Minutes”](#).

After the video, allow a few minutes for reflection. Then, go over the benefits listed on the board. Ask students if they have any benefits to add.

“We are going to end our lesson today by practicing mindfulness and meditation. While 3 minutes doesn’t seem like a long time to sit in reflection, it will have a big impact on your overall wellbeing and how you feel. ”

Have students find a comfortable position to sit or stand prior to this activity then play the following video, [“3 Minute Body Scan Meditation”](#).

After, reflect as a class allowing time for brief discussion. Ask the following questions, what did that feel like? Did it relax you? In what way? How does this relate to courage? How could you use this in your life? How could this make your life better?

“Great job! We are going to be incorporating more mindfulness into our lessons to help us stay focused and in the moment while we learn more about how to Choose Love.”

Call to Action

Search the internet or find a social media influencer online that promotes mindfulness and/or meditation. Pick one link, post or video related to mindfulness or meditation and try it yourself first. Then bring the link or influencer’s name back to class so we can put together a mindfulness folder for us to access at any time when we may need it!

1

EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY:

Positive Doubt

“We are going to watch a quick video clip on [Peer Pressure](https://safesha.re/hqk) (https://safesha.re/hqk). They are going to talk about a simple skill that you can use to overcome negative peer pressure.”

“So what was the magic skill to overcome peer pressure? That’s right, ‘Positive Doubt’. Who can explain what that means?” Allow for responses.

“‘Positive Doubt’ is when you respectfully express your dissent. Dissent means to differ in opinion or feeling or to disagree, particularly with what the majority think and feel. In the video, the students who expressed ‘Positive Doubt’ said something like, “I may be thinking differently, but...”. They were very politely and nicely saying, ‘No’, ‘I disagree’, ‘I have another or a different thought or feeling than you’. So to deal with negative peer pressure you have to have the courage not only to stick with your truth, but to express and speak it.”

“And then what happens? What did they mean by the ‘Power of One?’” Allow for reflection.

“Most of the time, this research shows us, it only takes one person to express dissent....to politely offer a different response, way of thinking, or action....for others to follow. This is where negative peer pressure can turn into positive peer pressure. If you have the courage to say, ‘No’ or to disagree and not follow along, that may be just the bit of courage to positively impact others, giving them the reason and the courage to be influenced to say, ‘No’ too. Your courageous voice can create a ripple effect. You have the ‘Power of One’ to positively influence and impact so many around you. How amazing is that? So instead of feeling weak and powerless in the face of negative peer pressure.....think courageously! Be empowered knowing the power you have when you have the courage to choose to express your true self, even if it’s different from your peers or from what’s popular. Your voice can help give others a voice and stop negative peer pressure.”

“Let’s brainstorm some phrases to show ‘Positive Doubt’. How can you respectfully express disagreement? How can you say no with gratitude? Let’s write some of these on the board and then you can pick your favorites to write in your journal.” List should

include the following: 'I may think differently but....', 'Thanks but I see this differently...', 'I respectfully disagree...', 'I hear what you're saying but that's not how I think/feel.', 'With all due respect, that's not right for me.', 'I think we have different ideas about this.', 'Sorry but my gut is telling me something different.', 'No offense, but I have to do what's right for me and this isn't it.', 'Sorry but that's not in line with my thinking/values/ goals.', 'Thanks but that's just not my style.', 'No offense, but that doesn't really work for me.'

"And remember, after you express 'Positive Doubt', then offer up an alternative....express your opinion, what you think and feel, and what you'd rather do. Let them know what's right for you and what might be a better action. Show them that you are in control and have your own ideas and your own choices."

"Starting today, hold onto your power. Have the courage to express 'Positive Doubt' and show the 'Power of One'! See how that changes how you feel and positively impacts your life!"



EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY:

Nudging the Numbat Mindfulness and Meditation
Additional Videos and Resources

[Mission Be, Mindful Education, Ocean Breath by Carin Winter](https://safesha.re/hql) (https://safesha.re/hql)

[Flying with Mindful Breathing by Carin Winter](https://safesha.re/hqm) (https://safesha.re/hqm)

[Be Present by David Romanelli](https://safesha.re/hqn) (https://safesha.re/hqn)

[What is Mindfulness? By David Romanelli](https://safesha.re/hqp) (https://safesha.re/hqp)



EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY:

My Happy, Peace Out Place

“Today we are going to be mindful, by expressing ourselves through art and creating our own happy place. Anytime, you are feeling anxious, afraid, frustrated or stressed out you can travel to this place just by visualizing this place and drawing it.”

“Think of a place either real or imagined that makes you feel relaxed and happy. It may be someplace that you know and have been before. Or perhaps it’s somewhere you’ve seen on TV, in the movies or in books and you’ve dreamed of going there. Where is it? What does it look like? Think of every detail of this happy, relaxed place. What is there that makes you feel happy and at peace? Give this place a name if you like. Remember you are taking an imaginary trip there through your drawing, so don’t forget to include yourself in the drawing.”

Allow students a few minutes to create their drawings. Time permitting, see if anyone will have the courage to share their ‘Happy Peace Out Place’.

“Were you able to visualize and create a happy place? How did you feel drawing this place? Did it make you feel different? Were you able to let go of some of your negative thoughts and challenging emotions and replace them with peace? What are the benefits to practicing this mindful practice? How could you apply this in your life?” Allow time for reflection and discussion.

“Remember anytime you need to relax and regroup, you may not be able to actually go there, but you can travel to your happy, peace out place through drawing. By doing this, you are stopping the negative thinking and replacing it with positive, feel-good images and thoughts that can change the way you feel.”



LESSON 4: Feelings Matter

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Identify positive and negative feelings
- Share personal fears
- Examine the physical effects of feeling fear
- Generate counter-fear statements
- Select the '3 Magic Questions' when encountering fear
- Apply the '3 Magic Questions' to fears and uncertainties.

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

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

Educator Prep

- Put the heading, 'Fears', on the board. This will be used to generate a list of students' fears
- Prepare the following video: [Overcoming Fear of Failure](https://safesha.re/hqs) (https://safesha.re/hqs)

Lesson

“We’ve been talking about dealing with negative and challenging feelings. Positive and negative feelings are all a part of life, but they are not who we are. We have the power to choose how we respond to our feelings at any given moment.”

“Have you ever heard someone say, ‘Be Fearless!’. Well, that would be great, but there’s no such thing as being fearless. Fear is a normal part of life and it can be a helpful emotion. Courage is about overcoming learned fear. Being courageous can increase serotonin, which makes us feel good, and decrease cortisol levels, which cause stress.”

“Let’s be courageous and share some of our fears.” Ask for volunteers to share something they are afraid of and make a list on the board. Start with a few of your own examples to make students feel more comfortable opening up and sharing. Be sure you are highlighting a variety of fears, both real and imagined, both things and situations.

“How did your body let you know that it was feeling fear?” Typical responses include: heart racing, sweaty palms, rapid breathing, difficulty focusing, temperature increase, feeling jittery, tense muscles, brain fog, upset stomach, etc.

“Today we are going to take away some of the power our fear can have over us. We are going to ‘face our fear’ and ‘talk back to fear’. Remember, you are in control and get to choose how you respond to your thoughts and feelings and how they affect you.”

“You are going to do an acting exercise. Each of you is going to ‘be’ the other person’s fear and talk like you are that fear. For example, if you are afraid of spiders, the other person would say something like, ‘I am hairy. I will catch you on my web and eat you. I can bite you. I am poisonous. I have sharp fangs and scary eyes, etc.’”

“The other person will then respond with rational, courageous statements to ‘talk back to fear’. You want to say things that counteract the fear and take away its power. For example in this instance you could respond,

‘Spiders are small and I can step on them. Most spiders are not poisonous. The odds of you biting me are very slim. There’s no way you could catch me on your web, I’m much bigger than you. You are more scared of me than I am of you. You are actually good because you eat other insects, etc.’”

“Practice doing this using your fears. If you are having trouble talking back to fear, ask your partner for help. Remember, by talking back to fear you are shrinking it and taking back control.”

“Jillian Michaels is a famous fitness expert, life coach, TV personality, author, and businesswoman. She says that when we deal with fear we have to ‘answer the what-ifs’. She talks about 3 questions that we need to ask ourselves and answer to help us move through our fear and use it to propel us forward. These questions can help you face and gain control over your fear, and help you move forward in learning, growing and succeeding. While we watch, try to pick out the three magic questions.”

Play [Overcoming Fear of Failure](#) video.

*This video has been cut to start at a specific time. If you search for the video and start before 2:18 there is inappropriate language.

“After the video, ask students if they were able to pick out the three scenarios or questions Jillian shared.” Write these on the board:

What if I try and it works? What if I try and it doesn’t work out? What if I do nothing?”

“Let’s write down these 3 magic questions.. Write them big and bold, highlight them, circle them, decorate them so they stand out. These are essential questions to use when faced with fear or uncertainty. Think of a big fear or uncertainty or distressing situation that you are facing right now. Ask the 3 magic ‘what-if’ questions and answer them. Be honest in answering these questions, look at the here and now and the bigger picture when you answer these questions.”

You can allow for students to share if they’re comfortable.

Call to Action

Create a power playlist! Find songs that you find inspirational, motivational or just get you in the mood to take charge. You can share your power playlist with others or keep it for yourself to push aside your fears and take control in your life.

1

EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY:

Alter Ego

“Today we are going to do an activity called, ‘Alter Ego’. What is an Alter Ego?” Allow for responses.

“Alter Ego is defined as another side of oneself. It’s a second self that usually is a different version of oneself. Often, an alter ego is the opposite side of a personality. It is also defined as a trusted friend or constant companion. You may know of some famous alter ego characters from movies. Like Superman is the alter ego of Clark Kent, Batman is the alter ego of Bruce Wayne, Diana Prince is the alter ego of Wonder Woman. Ian Fleming was a famous author who wrote the James Bond books that were turned into movies you’ve probably seen. James Bond was the alter ego he created. Tyler Perry created an alter ego in the loud, bold, full of attitude, Medea. Can you think of any other famous alter egos from the movies?”

“There are also some real life people who have created alter egos such as Beyonce’s alter ego, Sasha Fierce, Christina Aguilera’s alter ego, Xtina, or David Bowie’s alter ego, Ziggy Stardust. These alter egos all represent a different version of oneself or opposite side of one’s normal personality. Perhaps the alter ego represents the person who you’d like to be.”

“We are going to create our own alter egos. Let’s make this a person you would be if your fears, worries, and uncertainties didn’t hold you back. Create this version to be the best version of you....one that is confident, strong, courageous, positive, inspired and empowered. Think of things that hold you back, traits you have that you aren’t proud of, things you’d like to change... this should help you create your alter ego. Perhaps think of people in your life or in the world that are role models and inspire you....those that you wish to mimic in your life.”

“In your journals, create your alter ego. First describe your alter ego.....what does he/she look and act like.....what is their personality like....what are their strengths? After you have written about them in detail, give them a name. And then draw a picture of them. Remember that one definition of alter ego is trusted friend or constant companion. An alter ego is a different side of oneself. This means that this is a part of you that’s always there to call on when you need them. When you are facing difficult feelings, thoughts, and

situations, think to yourself, ‘what would my alter ego do? How would my alter ego handle this?’”



LESSON 5:

Courageous YOU

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Engage in meditation and relaxation techniques.➤ Critique a video clip on the Law of Attraction.➤ Identify what they want to attract in their lives.➤ Reflect on a song and connect it to their personal life.➤ Create their own '6 Word Memoirs.'	<p><u>CSED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Moral Character➤ Performance Character➤ Intellectual Character <p><u>SEL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Self Awareness➤ Self Management➤ Social Awareness➤ Relationship Skills➤ Responsible Decision Making

Educator Prep

- Preview and cue the following video [The law of attraction explained simply and beautifully. Credit: New Perspectives](https://safesha.re/hqu) (https://safesha.re/hqu)
- Preview and cue the following video: [I Lived by OneRepublic](https://safesha.re/hqv) (https://safesha.re/hqv)
- You will need notecards, sentence strips, or pieces of paper for this activity.

Lesson

“Time is precious! How do you want to spend your time? If you do the math, there are 1,440 minutes in each day. That’s a lot of minutes to waste away with bad choices and negativity, or a lot of time that we can spend on good choices and pursuits and positivity: showing courage and choosing love.”

“Confidence builds courage...the more confidence you have, the more courageous you’ll be. Courage and confidence are linked. The more confident you are, the more courageous you’ll be. And the more courageous you are, the more confidence you’ll have and find in yourself.”

“Let’s take a minute to relax ourselves so we’ll be ready for more learning and growing. I’d like you to take a deep breath in through your mouth and hold it. While you are holding your breath, tense every part of your body.....tighten as hard as you can each part of your body from your head to your toes for 5-10 seconds as you hold your breath. Then, slowly let out your breath while relaxing every muscle in your body. Exhale completely and let your entire body unwind and relax, like a knotted rope that is untied and unwound.”

“This simple trick takes only seconds but is a great way to calm yourself anytime and anywhere.”

“Today we are going to watch a video with some famous people that I’m sure you’ll recognize. They are talking about the Law of Attraction. We’re going to find out what the Law of Attraction is all about.” Show the following video: [The law of attraction explained simply and beautifully. Credit: New Perspectives](#)

“So what did you think of that video clip?” Allow time for reflection and discussion. Ask some of the following questions:

- What was the message of the video?
- Do you agree with what they were saying?
- Can you share a time when you felt this Law of Attraction work for you?
- How does this apply to our discussion of confidence and courage?
- How does it relate to Choosing Love?
- How can you apply some of the words and ideas you heard to your life?

“I’m going to hand out a notecard or sentence strip to each of you. On it I want you to write one thing that you learned from this video that will improve your confidence, increase your courage and improve your life.” Allow a minute or two for students to make

their comment. Then, ask for a few volunteers to share as you take their idea and put it up on the wall on the board for all to see.

“So The law of attraction quite simply is like saying that you are a human magnet and you attract back what you put out. If you give out negative energy, that’s what will come right back to you. The Law of Attraction then is about the ability to attract to us whatever it is we are focusing on, either good and bad. Now we’re going to shift and focus on describing ourselves so we can attract in others what we see in ourselves.

“We are going to spend the rest of our class time today creating something called a ‘6 Word Memoir’. Does anyone know what a memoir is? Some synonyms for memoir are: account, story, record, profile, narrative.”

“It is said that the famous Novelist Ernest Hemingway was once asked to write a complete story in just 6 words. You can go to Smithmag.net to find out more about writing, storytelling, personal narratives and the ‘6 Word Memoir Project’.”

“Today, you will create your own ‘6 Word Memoir’. A great way to start is to look at yourself and what is unique about you and important to you. The song that we heard today was entitled, ‘I Lived’. How do you want your life story to be? What 6 words can represent you and how you live? Let’s take the next 5-10 minutes to write our own memoirs.” Give students the ‘My Life in 6 Words’ sheet and have them complete it. Time permitting, students can flip their paper over and write their words and add a drawing. Save some time to allow students to share their, ‘My Life in 6 Words’.

Call to Action

Share your 6 word memoir with your family. What were their reactions? Have your family create their own 6 word memoir as well!

1

EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY:

Coat of Arms

“I am going to give each of you a ‘Coat of Arms’. How many of you know what a Coat of Arms is? It’s a distinctive visual design on a shield like a crest or emblem, which is unique to an individual, family or country. Often they have symbols to represent achievements, values, strengths and attributes. And usually they have a motto, or a short sentence telling/showing the spirit of purpose of the person. Today you are going to make your own Coat of Arms.”

You may choose to have a couple pictures of a few real ‘Coat of Arms’ so students can get a better visual idea.

(<https://chooselovemovement.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Coat-of-Arms.pdf>) And you may want to create your own as an example.

“I am going to pass out a sheet with an outline of a Coat of Arms on it. You will be filling it out in this way:

1st Box: A Character/Personality Strength you have

2nd Box: A special talent you have/Something you do well

3rd: Your Biggest Accomplishment

4th Box: Something that makes you Unique and Special

5th Box: What you like MOST about Yourself Your Personal Motto: What is your personal spirit or purpose? What light do you shine on the world?”

“Usually a Coat of Arms would have symbols or drawings. But we can use both pictures and words. Take your time to write and draw each of the sections of the shield in a way that shows who you really are and shines a light on your value and worth. Decorate them to represent you!”

Allow students time to complete. Time permitting, have students move around the room sharing their ‘Coat of Arms’ with other classmates. Have other students write a positive word or compliment to the student in the area outside the ‘Coat of Arms’.

“Use your imagination to carry this shield with you throughout your day. Use it to protect you from people who try to bring you down or change you in some way. Use it to remind

yourself of who you are, how strong and special you are, and what you are capable of doing!”



EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY:

'I Lived' Reflection

“We are going to take a minute to listen to a song called, ‘I Lived’, by One Republic. This is one of those power songs that we talked about earlier....a song that is empowering, one that can inspire and motivate you. Confidence can inspire and motivate you. Courage can inspire and motivate you. Choosing Love can inspire and motivate you. Confidence, Courage, and Choosing Love all lead you to a life worth living. Let’s listen to this song....relax, soak it in...let it empower you!”

Play song: [I Lived by OneRepublic](#)

“What’s the first word that comes to your mind after hearing that? How does it make you feel? Take a few moments to write this down in your journal, along with any other reflections.” Allow time for anyone to share their reflections.



EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY:

Vision Board

“Did you know that it takes courage to dream big? And while you are trying to make your dreams come true, you will have challenges and failures. Whether you let these things hold you back and keep you from achieving your goals and having success is in your control. It starts with you. This is a story about actor and comedian Jim Carrey, and how he had the courage to dream big and not let failure get the best of him.”

“When Jim Carrey was 14 years old, his father lost his job and his family hit rough times. They moved into a VW van on a relative’s lawn, but that did not stop Carrey from dreaming big. In fact, the young aspiring comedian—who was so dedicated to his craft that at age 10, he mailed his résumé to The Carroll Burnett Show—took an eight-hour-per-day factory job after school to help make ends meet. It took courage for him to do this. He could have just given up, but he didn’t. He had the courage to believe in his dreams.”

“At age 15, Carrey performed his comedy routine onstage for the first time, wearing a suit his mom had made for him. He was so nervous that he almost didn’t do it, but he was brave and went onstage anyway. He totally bombed, but he was undeterred. He had the courage to keep trying.”

“The next year, at age 16, he decided to focus on comedy full time. This was a risky move and required a lot of courage. He moved to L.A., where he knew no one. He must have felt very nervous, but he would not let fear get in the way of his dreams. Carrey would park on Mulholland Drive every night and visualize his success. He “planted the seeds of positive thinking.” On one of these nights he wrote himself a check for \$10 million for ‘Acting Services Rendered,’ which he dated for Thanksgiving 1995. Just before that date, he hit his big payday with the movie ‘Dumb and Dumber.’ The rest is history as Jim Carrey has gone on to star in many major movies and become a well-known comedian and movie star.”

“What stood out most to you or impressed you about his story? How did he show courage? What obstacles and failures did he face?” Ask these and any other pertinent questions allowing for brief reflection.

“Jim Carrey faced hardships and experienced failures, but he persevered. Perseverance is when you continue to work towards a goal despite challenges, setbacks, or failures. Other words for perseverance are determination, grit, or tenacity. If you have perseverance you won’t quit and you won’t give up. People who have the courage to persevere see obstacles not as something negative, but as opportunities to grow, learn, and become stronger. Jim Carrey had courage and perseverance . He used positive thinking to help him achieve his goals, but I am sure that he had some negative thoughts. I am going to read a few thoughts he may have had along the way and I will ask for volunteers to change those thoughts into positive thoughts.” Share a few or all of these thoughts and call for replacing them with positive thoughts.

“Age 10- I will never be on the Carol Burnett Show. I don’t have a chance.

Age 10- I will never find a job. I won’t make enough money to support us.

Age 15- I can’t go out and do my routine. I am not funny enough.

Age 15- People will make fun of me and my homemade suit.

Age 15- I really bombed that routine. I am never going to do this again.

1995- I will never get a major role in a movie. Why should I even bother?”

“As you can see, you are in control of how you react to challenges and failures. You get to decide how you think about and respond to things that happen in your life. You can pick negative or positive! You get to choose your visions and dreams and you can pick small or BIG! In your journals, draw a large rectangle and put your name in it in big, bold letters....as if it’s your name in lights on a billboard illuminated for all to see. Underneath, write a vision or dream you have for your future. Remember, think BIG and throw away the I can’ts for I CAN!”



LESSON 6:

Cut the Cord

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Analyze the importance of accepting differences.➤ Discuss, connect and reflect on courage literature.➤ Practice cutting the anger cord to past anger and resentment➤ compare/contrast upstanders and bystanders➤ Role play scenarios to illustrate an upstander response in real life situations➤ highlight the characteristics, traits, and behaviors of courageous individuals.	<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➤ Social Awareness➤ Relationship Skills➤ Responsible Decision Making

Educator Prep

- For this lesson you will need notecards or pieces of paper.
- Watch the story about [The Buddha and the Angry Man](https://safesha.re/hqw) (https://safesha.re/hqw)

Lesson

“Over the past few weeks we’ve been talking about courage, confidence and talking back to fear. Today, we are going to talk more about letting go over anger and what we call ‘cutting the anger chord.’ We’re going to watch a short video called ‘The Buddha and the Angry Man.’ While we’re watching, see if you can figure out the message that the story is trying to convey.”

Watch the following story about [The Buddha and the Angry Man](#).

“What are your takeaways from this video?” Allow for student responses.

“I am going to pass out a notecard to each of you. What you will write on this note card will be private. It should represent the things that you need to let go of....the hurt, anger, sorrow, pain, disappointments, grudges, resentments....the mistreatments or wrongdoings by others to you. Write down one, two or more statements, people or ideas that you are holding onto in anger or frustration or resentment.” Allow time for students to write their ideas and respect their privacy. You may choose to engage in this activity as well to show a commitment to the learning and the process.

“Now I want you to take that notecard and rip it into as many pieces as you’d like. With each rip I want you to repeat the phrase, ‘I am letting go of my anger and frustrations. I have the ability to choose how I respond.’” Give students a few moments to complete this portion of the activity then go around with the garbage can and allow students to “throw away” their anger and resentment.

“How did you feel doing these activities? (Frustrated, incompetent). “How does this activity relate to letting go?” (When you carry around guilt, grudges, etc., it is hard to move forward with your life.)

“It feels good to let go— letting go doesn’t mean forgetting or whitewashing the other person’s behavior. It means protecting ourselves from the negative effects of staying stuck. Anger and bitterness take away our energy and focus toward what makes us happy and the people who love and care about us. We have a choice to give in to the anger and bitterness or to choose to be happy.”

“Life is about making choices. Every choice you make, every action you take, effects not only you but those around you. But did you know every time you don’t act that is a choice, too? Like when everyone is picking on someone and you do nothing....that’s a choice. Choosing to do nothing also creates ripples.”

“A bystander is someone who is a spectator, an on-looker, an observer. When you are a bystander it means you are present, but you do not take part. So if someone was getting bullied, a bystander would be sitting right there and not doing anything, not taking part in any way.”

“An upstander is someone who sees something wrong and acts to make it right. When you are an upstander you speak or act in defense or support of another individual. The upstander gets involved and helps the victim being bullied. The upstander is choosing love and acting courageously.”

“We are going to break into groups. You will each get a scenario to act out. Make sure at least one person (you can do more than one per scenario) is chosen for each scenario to be an upstander and show how they can show courage and choose love in the situation.”

Let students act out skits in their groups and then allow time for some groups to share with the larger class. Be sure to walk around the room and listen in or jump in can be an upstander, too!

Use the following scenarios or allow students to create their own scenarios:

Scene 1: You are sitting with your friends at the cafeteria. A student comes over to sit at your table but your friends say there’s no room and then laugh.

Scene 2: You are hanging out with the "popular" kids at a mall. The group starts telling one of the kids in the group to steal a pair of sunglasses. All of them join in and try to get him/her to do it.

Scene 3: You are with your sports team/dance group/math team/theater group/music group. They are all smoking except for one. The group is pressuring that one person to smoke.

Scene 4: You are hanging with your friends at your locker. A student comes over and all of your friends start making fun of the way he/she is dressed.

Scene 5: You are planning a party with a group of friends. Everyone there is saying not to invite one person from your friend group while he/she is sitting right there.

SCENE 6: You and your friends are at a lake with cliffs. Everyone is jumping off of the cliffs except for one person who is scared. The group starts taunting and calling that person chicken.

“How did you feel after completing this activity? Remember, be an upstander, not a bystander.”

“We’ve had a full day talking about cutting our anger chord and being an upstander. Your challenge is to let go of your anger toward a situation or someone and move on. Not for them, but for you. As Eleanor Roosevelt once said, ‘No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.’”

Call to Action

Create a profile of a courageous role model (celebrity or not) to share with a friend, family member, on social media or in our class. Your profiles should explain who your role model is, why you chose this person and what characteristics they display that make them a courageous role model.



EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY:

Diamond Poem

“Today we are going to remind ourselves of what courage is all about by creating a Diamante Poem. A diamante poem takes its name from the shape it makes: a diamond. Diamante poems were introduced in 1969 by Iris Tiedt. There are two types of this poem: the synonym diamante uses two synonyms as the beginning and ending subject; the antonym diamante uses two antonyms as the beginning and ending subject. That is, to make a poem using two nouns that are the opposite of each other. Today we are going to write a diamante/diamond poem reflecting on courage....what it is and what it isn’t, the opposite of courage.”

“You can look at my poem as an example.” Read your poem to the students. **“I am going to hand out a worksheet that gives you specific directions on how to create your own Diamante or Diamond Poem on Courage. A diamante poem has a specific structure. It is seven lines long. Each line has specific types of words. And remember when you write it, it will take the shape of a diamond. On the board I have written the pattern:**

Line 1: one noun - the beginning subject of the poem

Line 2: two adjectives that describe the subject in line 1

Line 3: three -ing verbs related to the subject in line 1

Line 4: four nouns: two about the subject in line 1, two about the one in line 7

Line 5: three -ing verbs related to the subject in line 7

Line 6: two adjectives that describe the subject in line 7

Line 7: one noun - the ending subject of the poem”

“Take a few minutes to create your Diamante Poem and then let’s share a few if we have time. Describe what you’ve learned about courage and what courage means to you. Let your words be your inspirations!” Allow time to share and reflect on a few poems that students wrote. Encourage classmates to give positive comments about what they like about students’ poems. You may also choose to have students write these up nicely and decorate for a classroom or school display.

DIAMANTE

Diamante are diamond-shaped poems that contrast two nouns.

Step 1: Think of two **nouns** that are opposite of each other. Write on Line 1 and the other on Line 7. **Step 2:** On Line 2, write two **adjectives** that describe the noun on Line 1

Step 3: On Line 3, write three **"ing" verbs** that relate to Line 1.

Step 4: Write two **nouns** that relate to Line 7 on the last two line of Line 4.

Step 5: Write two **nouns** that relate to Line 7 on the last two line of Line 4.

Step 6: Write three **"-ing" verbs** that relate to the noun in Line 7 on Line 5.

Step 7: Write two **adjectives** that describe the noun in Line 7 on Line 6.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

2

EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY:

SMART Time Capsule

“It can take courage to dream big - to set intentions and make them happen. Today, we are going to focus on goal setting. We’ve learned a lot about courage and it’s time to set some courage goals for the year. We are going to use the following acronym to help you remember how to set goals: SMART.

SMART goals are useful ways to help you achieve your intentions. SMART is an acronym that stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timebound.”

“First, goals need to be specific. What exactly do you want to practice? For example, ‘appreciating my classmates’ is not as specific as ‘Thank my classmates for sharing their ideas’.”

“Next, goals need to be measurable. This describes how much, how many, or how often. For example, ‘twice per week’ or ‘every time.’”

“Your goals then must be achievable. That means it should stretch you out of your comfort zone, but not be so difficult that it seems impossible or overwhelming, or you will never stick with it and reach it. It should challenge us to be better people. For example, ‘make sure my classmates feel appreciated’ isn’t achievable because other peoples’ feelings are out of your control. ‘Thank my classmates’ is achievable because we can control our own behavior.”

“Your goal should also be relevant to your intention. Make sure you can clearly see how achieving your goal helps you get closer to fulfilling your intention or whatever is important to you.”

“Finally, determine a timeline for your goal. How long will it take you to complete?”

“You are going to set your intention and then write a SMART goal to fulfill it.”

“Remember, an intention is a dream or vision you have for the future. It’s a direction you’d like your life to take.”

“For example, an intention I have for this year is....”

Examples could include: to be healthier, to decrease anxiety/worry/stress, to become a better student, to get along better with others, to learn a new skill or subject, to improve in certain areas of school or activities such as art, drama, sports, etc.

“After you set your intention, write at least one SMART goal to help you fulfill your intention. If you can write more than one goal that’s great! Let’s write our intention and SMART goal(s) in our journal.” Allow time for students to write in their journals.

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

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

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



Grade 8 | [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: Gratitude Starts with Me (Self Esteem)

Lesson 4: Gratitude Mind Shift

Lesson 5: I’d Like to Thank the Academy...

Lesson 6: Celebrating Gratitude

EXTENSION LESSONS

Ext Lesson 1: Gratitude Quotes

Ext Lesson 2: Practicing Gratitude

Ext Lesson 3: Gratitude Gateway

Ext Lesson 4: Gratitude Symbols

Ext Lesson 5: Gratitude Stones

Ext Lesson 6: Gratitude Stroll

Ext Lesson 7: Smile

Ext Lesson 8: The Laughter Lounge

Ext Lesson 9: Turn A Mistake Into Something Great

Ext Lesson 10: Hall of Famer

Ext Lesson 11: Lessons Learned

Ext Lesson 12: Be A Glow Stick

Ext Lesson 13: Thank You in 29 Languages

Ext Lesson 14: Gratitude Quilt

Ext Lesson 15: Multiply Gratitude



LESSON 1: Getting to Know Gratitude

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Define gratitude.
- Analyze the benefits of gratitude
- Examine the neuroscience of gratitude.
- Explain neuroplasticity.
- Create a personal prioritized list of gratitude benefits.

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 videos:

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

‘[Neuroplasticity](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELpfYCZa87g)’ (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELpfYCZa87g>)

• Project the [following chart](#) on a whiteboard or [make copies for handouts](#):

You may choose to review and use the article entitled, ‘[The 31 Benefits of Gratitude You Didn’t Know About: How Gratitude Can Change Your Life](#)’, 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 to feel grateful and experience all of these amazing benefits!”

Show video: [Neuroplasticity](#)

“So this is groundbreaking news -- at ANY age, we can actually re-train our brains through repeated practice of specific thoughts and feelings. So can anyone guess why we are continuously learning about and practicing the Choose Love Formula throughout the year?

“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 from Robby Novak, otherwise known as ‘Kid President,’ <https://youtu.be/yA5Qpt1JRE4>. 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.
- Create gratitude statements based on people, places, things and events.

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>)
- Review the [Gratitude Breath Card](#) and/or prepare to distribute it.
- 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. Rotation 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. Your stomach should grow bigger, like a balloon. 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 following 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.

Allow for responses.

“For the rest of the class we are going to engage in two activities to practice our own gratitude; having a positive perspective where you see the glass as half full (or growth mindset like we’ve talked about earlier this year) expressing gratitude to others. Here we go!”

“Let’s talk about a challenging experience or time that you may have gone through and look at it through a new lens, a gratitude lens. How can you take a challenging experience and focus on the positive? Does anyone want to share an example?”

If students are reluctant to share, you may break the ice by sharing your own example. We all have challenging experiences, but they do ultimately help us learn and grow in some way!

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

“Now that we’ve practiced changing our perspective, let’s play a little game. Who remembers the game musical chairs? Well, we are going to play a game called, ‘Gratitude Chairs.’”

On every seat is a colored card or ribbon. When the music stops, you will use the key on the board to say something you are grateful for based on the color where you end.

The only difference is that we will NOT be taking a chair away. We will keep playing a few rounds until we are full of gratitude!”

****See educator note for a variation of this activity for social distancing requirements.**

“Each color matches the key I’ve written on the board. We are going to take a moment and create a gratitude statement using the color of our card as a guide. Does everyone understand?”

Begin playing the game. When the music stops say the following:

“Look at the chair you ended up on and the key on the board. You must say aloud one thing that makes you happy based on the key. This is our chance to express gratitude for all of the big and little things in life that make us happy. What’s most important is to have fun and be happy...enjoy this moment of gratitude.”

You may choose to end the class with a reflection on how students feel about expressing gratitude, or you can continue to play if students are engaged until the end of class.

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: Gratitude Starts with Me (Self Esteem)

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Define self esteem.➤ Identify the benefits of appreciating yourself.➤ Create affirmations to combat negative self talk.➤ Generate a list of positive personal qualities from A to Z.➤ Connect a classmate with a gratitude statement to share.	<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

- Print/distribute the [Amazing Me from A to Z worksheet](#) for each student.
- Write the names of all of the students in the class on small slips of paper and put them in a jar or bowl.
- Have two small squares of wrapping paper or patterned paper or notecards for each student.

**To modify the activity in this lesson for social distancing measures, you may choose to assign classmates to each student to write their compliment and the compliment cards can be placed on a wall or around the room for students to see, rather than

handing a piece of paper from one student to another.

Lesson

“Let’s take a Mindful Minute. Close your eyes and take a deep gratitude breath. Focus your attention on yourself as a superhero.”

“We know having gratitude can improve our lives. One of the things we should be grateful for is ourselves!”

“The first step in learning to love yourself and feel comfortable in your own shoes is to show appreciation for yourself on a daily basis. It’s important to take the time to remind ourselves of and be grateful for all of the wonderful things about ourselves...our personalities, qualities and traits, talents, achievements and successes. Doing this is practicing self-love or self-compassion and it not only makes us feel good, but it boosts our self esteem.”

“Our self-esteem is like a shield that can protect us from negativity. Having strong, high self-esteem means you feel good about yourself, you have a positive judgement of yourself and feel that you have value and worth. This inspires and motivates you to make positive choices and actions and it promotes a belief in your ability to learn, grow and succeed.”

“We build our self-esteem by accepting and loving ourselves. You have to do this 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.”

“We’ve talked about affirmations before. Remember, 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.”

“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.

“We are going to boost our self-esteem by highlighting things that we love about ourselves. What are some traits and qualities about you that you love and that you are grateful for? What are your strengths? And what are some silly, goofy things about you that make you smile? What makes you special?”

I will give you a worksheet called, ‘Amazing Me From A to Z’. On it, list the things you love about yourself using every letter of the alphabet as a starter. You can use words or sentences. Be creative and be thankful for amazing you!”

Time permitting, ask for volunteers to share something for each letter of the alphabet.

“Before we leave today, I am going to ask you all to take a moment to boost someone else’s self esteem in this class.”

“I have everybody’s names written on slips of paper in this jar/bowl. When I call your name, you will go up and pick a name out of the jar. Don’t tell anyone who you have.

You will also pick out two squares of paper. When you return to your seat, you will write a compliment to the classmate whose name is written on the slip of paper you picked. Then, you may choose another classmate to give another compliment to.

Try to write something more than ‘you are nice’. Be specific and detailed in writing your compliments. For example, ‘I like the way you always include others’. When you have written the compliments, fold them up and deliver them.”

Allow students time to pick their names, write compliments and circulate around to deliver their compliments. After students have delivered compliments to classmates and read

compliments given to them, debrief as a class with some of these questions:

- How did it feel to give a compliment?
- Did it make you feel more connected to a classmate?
- How did it feel to receive a compliment?

Call to Action

Pick two family members or friends and complete the compliment activity from class. Be sure to share your compliments with the people!



LESSON 4: Gratitude Mind Shift

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Connect gratitude to a positive mindset.
- Compare and contrast an optimist and a pessimist.
- Examine the positives and negatives of being an optimist and pessimist.
- Explain how being an optimist benefits you.
- Explain the personal effects of being a pessimist.
- Practice changing perspectives using optical illusions.

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Responsible Decision Making

Educator Prep

Prepare printed optical illusions or use the following site for students to access independently or through a digital board for the class:

<https://www.optics4kids.org/illusions> .

Lesson

“In our lives we will have a lot of good days...days where it’s easy to be happy. But we will also have days that aren’t so great and when we find it hard to feel good.

“One of the most important ways we can learn to deal with our negative feelings and thoughts on those bad days is to utilize coping skills. One essential coping skill that we’ve been talking about is practicing gratitude.

“Gratitude is a coping skill that can help us deal with those cloudy days, those times when nothing seems to go right and we feel down. Gratitude changes the way we see things.”

“It’s all about perspective! In your own words, what is perspective? How do you know what your perspective is?” Allow for students to respond. Validate all responses and try to connect them to the focus for the lesson on perspective.

“What is the difference between an optimist and a pessimist?” Allow for students to respond.

“How do you think being an optimist can benefit you?

“How do you think being a pessimist could hurt you?

“How do you think being grateful could change your perspective?

“Let’s talk about the optimist first. Let’s think of all the words we can to describe an optimist and what they would be like and how their life would be?” Make a list on the board with ‘Optimist’ as a heading.

“Now let’s look at the pessimist. Let’s think of all of the words we can use to describe a pessimist. What would this person be like? How would their life be?” Make a list on the board with ‘Pessimist’ as a heading.

Use the following questions for discussion and reflection:

- Who would you rather be? Why?
- Who would you want to be friends with? Why?

- What would the life of an optimist be like?
- What would the life of a pessimist be like?
- Who do you think would be more successful and why?
- How do you become an optimist?

“The good news is if you are a pessimist, you can always become an optimist. You can change your perspective at any moment. And having gratitude is the quickest way to change your perspective.”

“Let’s have some fun and look at some optical illusions to practice changing our perspectives. Remember if you change your perspective when you look at the photos, you may see something unexpected and different, perhaps something more favorable or inspiring.”

Share the following link for students to access or have the link already on a digital classroom projector/device: <https://www.optics4kids.org/illusions>

“Pretty wild, huh? It’s amazing how people can be looking at the same thing and yet see two different things. There are always different ways of looking at things. But we want to see things through the optimist’s eyes. We want to have an attitude of gratitude which gives us a positive perspective.”

Call to Action

Share one or more optical illusions with a family member or friend. Did they see what you saw? Were you able to change your perspective to see what they saw if it was something different? Remember, WE have control over our thoughts and how we respond!



Grade 8 | GRATITUDE | Lesson 5

LESSON 5: I'd Like To Thank The Academy...

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Identify people for a gratitude list.
- Explain the personal reasons for each gratitude list item/person.
- View and reflect on a celebrity acceptance speech
- Create a personal acceptance speech.

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: [Matthew McConaughey's Oscar speech](https://youtu.be/wD2cVhC-63I)
(<https://youtu.be/wD2cVhC-63I>)

Lesson

“Each stage of our life is unique and a learning experience. We might 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 how we respond.

“We can also empower ourselves by having an attitude of gratitude. We can choose to 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.

“We can get stuck in a negative cycle and forget coping mechanisms that we’ve learned, but it’s important to know that every moment of the day presents us with an opportunity to have courage, practice gratitude, and to choose love. We are powerful beings and each of us has what it takes within us to make the right choices that create a life we can be proud of and enjoy, as well as a life that enriches the lives of others.”

“While we have a lot of power and control over our lives, we can’t forget the important people who have been there for us and helped us navigate the challenges and problems that we may face. You know who those people are.”

“Let’s take a Mindful Minute and think about those individuals. Close your eyes and see the person or people who you greatly value in your life. For a minute, think of what that person or people mean to you and all the ways in which they have enriched your life.

“Who were you thinking of? Think about the 5 most important people in your life. Who are the people you are most grateful for? And why are you grateful for them? Reflect on that. Now, take those five people and think about why you are grateful for them.”

After, take a moment to share 1 of your 5 most important people with the class. Then give students an opportunity to share one person if they’d like.

“Film award shows such as The Grammys, Academy Awards, Emmy Awards, MTV Movie/Music Awards can help showcase gratitude. When a celebrity wins an award they are given a few seconds to say who or what they are thankful for. Stars have under 45 seconds to give their thanks. Let’s watch Matthew McCounahey’s Oscar acceptance speech.”

Play [Matthew McConaughey’s Oscar speech](#).

“What are your reactions to his acceptance or thank you speech? How does it make you feel? Who does he express gratitude to? What lessons can be learned from his speech? Does this speech inspire you? In what ways?”

Allow for reflection and discussion.

“Now it’s your turn. If you won an Oscar, a Grammy, or any other award, who would you thank? What would your speech sound like? Write your acceptance or thank you speech.”

After students have written this, have them share them with the whole class. You can even let them use a podium, turn off the lights and shine a flashlight on them to make it seem as if they are really in the limelight onstage. Or you may choose to have students share their speeches in small groups or with partners.

Call to Action

You have a choice for Call to Action Today...

- **Option 1:** Share your acceptance speech with a family member or friend. Try to find someone you wrote about!
- **Option 2:** Write a thank you note or create a thank you speech for one person in your life and share it with them.
- **Option 3:** Write a thank you note or create a thank you speech for a Veteran or military service member and send it or share it with them.



LESSON 6: Celebrating Gratitude

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Reflect on a gratitude quote.
- Identify personal learning targets and takeaways from the Gratitude unit.
- Participate in a cooperative game to celebrate gratitude.

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Responsible Decision Making

Educator Prep

- Provide a large piece of Chart Paper or Poster Board along with markers.
- Preview the game instructions below or play your favorite cooperative game.
- **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.).
- **Gratitude Guess Who** -- Have each student write down something they are grateful for on a slip of paper and put the papers in a bowl or basket. Then, go around the class and have everyone take turns picking a paper and reading it. The rest of the class tries to identify who the gratitude belongs to. *An alternate for this activity is to have students stand up or at their seats pick one person in the class and say a grateful comment. Students have to guess who the comment is for.
- **Gratitude Share** -- Write the following questions down on a piece of paper, fold them, and have students (or you) pick one from a bowl (or randomly assign)..

- Describe something lucky that happened to you last year and how your life improved.
- Describe a peak experience from the year, what made it special, and why you are grateful for it.
- Describe a special favor you received, how it helped you, and how it touched you.
- Describe a special gift or talent you have, how you use it, and why you are grateful for it.
- Name someone you know who makes your life better, and why.
- Think of something you used today that other people may take for granted.
- What do you appreciate the most about the person sitting next to you?
- Describe something you are particularly grateful for in your life, and why.
- Describe something that you do often that makes you happy, and why.
- Describe something that happened this past week that you are grateful for, and why.
- Describe something you have done that you are particularly proud of, and why.

Lesson

“We are almost done with our Gratitude Unit, but I think we can learn just a little bit more about the power of gratitude. Let’s get started today by thinking about the following quote:

Smile in the mirror. Do that every morning and you'll start to see a big difference in your life.” - Yoko Ono

“Do you agree? How can smiling at yourself in the mirror every morning make a difference in your life?” Allow for reflection and responses.

“Smiling is one way to quickly and easily change the wiring in our brain to promote happiness. What is life like when you are happy? How does being happy influence your decisions, choices, actions, and interactions? What about if you are sad.....how does that influence how you think, act and connect with others?” Allow for class discussion.

“Being happy definitely makes our lives better. When we are happy, it’s easier to make good, healthy choices. When we are happy we are more pleasant to be around and we are better able to communicate and interact with others in meaningful, positive ways.

“We are going to take the time today to review what you’ve learned about Gratitude. First, take a minute to think or 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.

***To modify this activity, students can complete this portion of the lesson independently, or you can use the board and brainstorm together as a group.**

Some questions for students 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 to add, comment or reflect on each other’s work in a positive way.

“Let’s end our gratitude unit with some fun! We are going to play a game to celebrate all that we have learned, the gratitude that we have and the gratitude we will show in the future.”

Play the following game(s), or one of your choosing. Give students a chance to relax and have fun to celebrate the end of this unit.

Gratitude Pictionary, Gratitude Guess Who, Gratitude Share.

“We’ve learned a lot about gratitude and a lot about ourselves. We’ll be moving on to the next part of the Choose Love Formula which is Forgiveness. I hope you’ll continue to learn more about gratitude and get into the habit of practicing it everyday!

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

Call to Action

Pick one of the following games and play it with your family or friends!

- 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.).
- Gratitude Guess Who
 - Have each student write down something they are grateful for on a slip of paper and put the papers in a bowl or basket. Then, go around the class and have everyone take turns picking a paper and reading it. The rest of the class tries to identify who the gratitude belongs to. *An alternate for this activity is to have students stand up or at their seats pick one person in the class and say a grateful comment. Students have to guess who the comment is for.
- Gratitude Share
 - Write the following questions down on a piece of paper, fold them, and have students (or you) pick one from a bowl (or randomly assign).
 - Describe something lucky that happened to you last year and how your life improved.
 - Describe a peak experience from the year, what made it special, and why you are grateful for it.
 - Describe a special favor you received, how it helped you, and how it touched you.
 - Describe a special gift or talent you have, how you use it, and why you are grateful for it.
 - Name someone you know who makes your life better, and why.
 - Think of something you used today that other people may take for granted.
 - What do you appreciate the most about the person sitting next to you?
 - Describe something you are particularly grateful for in your life, and why.
 - Describe something that you do often that makes you happy, and why.
 - Describe something that happened this past week that you are grateful for, and why.
 - Describe something you have done that you are particularly proud of, and why.



Grade 8 | GRATITUDE | Extension Lessons

EXTENSION LESSON 1:

Gratitude Quotes

Educator Prep

- Make a copy of the [Gratitude Quotes Sheet](#) for each student.
- Prepare to add to the Choose Love Constitution.

Activity

“Gratitude is when you feel thankful for something or someone, and want to share that feeling with others. We know that people who practice gratitude are happier and healthier. Gratitude helps us be more hopeful and it gives us more energy.”

“Practicing gratitude can help us find encouragement if we feel overwhelmed or become frustrated. Gratitude helps us feel better about ourselves, our lives and the world around us which is empowering and inspiring!”

“We need to add gratitude to our Choose Love Constitution. One of the best things about gratitude is that it not only helps us feel good but it also improves the lives of others, especially if we express our gratitude to others around us. If we all agree to try to practice gratitude on a daily basis, we will be happier which helps us connect in more positive ways and have a warmer, ‘feel good’ classroom climate.”

Write gratitude into the constitution.

“Today, let’s take a look at some quotes about gratitude. I’m handing out a sheet filled with quotes on gratitude. Choose one and write it in your Choose Love Journal.”

“Write down why you chose it, what it means to you, and how you can apply it to your life. Then talk to your partner about your reflections and responses.”

After a few minutes, allow for some students to share the quote that they picked and why. Time permitting, you can have students find more quotes on gratitude to add to their list. This could also be an extension activity or extra credit assignment where students find a new quote or song lyric about gratitude and reflect on it.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

EXTENSION LESSON 2:

Practicing Gratitude

Educator Prep

- Preview and Cue the following video, '[Why Practice Gratitude-How it Helps](https://youtu.be/-C5_pVd9Qz4)' (https://youtu.be/-C5_pVd9Qz4)

Activity

“Let’s start today by taking a Mindful Minute to focus our attention and calm ourselves. Find a comfortable position to sit. Close your eyes. Make a fist with your hand and squeeze it as tight as you can.

“Over the course of our Mindful Minute, focus on releasing the tension in your fist and relaxing your hand. As you do so, imagine letting go of tension not only in your hand, but in your whole body. Like letting go of a rope that is wound tightly, picture the tension and stress being released from your body and mind.

“We’ve learned about all of the many benefits of practicing gratitude. When we show gratitude we can decrease stress and anxiety which is healthy for our bodies, minds and our overall well-being. With less stress and anxiety, we can feel better and that will positively impact just about every aspect of our lives.”

“Would you say that being a teenager is a particularly stressful time in your life? What are some examples of what makes it really stressful?” Allow for responses.

“As a teenager, you are growing physically, emotionally and socially. You are leaving your comfort zone by becoming more independent with greater responsibilities.

“You are trying and learning new things and forming new habits. You are faced with dealing with more complicated emotions, thoughts, and choices.

“You are figuring out who you are, where you fit in and navigating relationships and peer pressures.

“All of this can of course leave you feeling extra stressed, and sometimes extra frustrated and sad. Practicing gratitude can help ease the stress, difficulty, and discomfort of these ‘growing pains’.

“An example could be like being stressed and upset that you didn’t make the soccer team, but then you remind yourself that now you’ll have time to join the yearbook club with some of your close friends.”

“We’ve been talking a lot about how even though you can’t always choose what happens to you, you can always choose how you respond. You have a lot of power in having that choice. And this is a perfect example of that. By finding things to be thankful for, you can always make the best of any situation, shift your thinking and response to something favorable, turn the negative into positive, feel good and be your best self.”

“Neuroplasticity is our ability to actually change our brains. It is the rewiring of the brain. Do you remember that video about rewiring our brains? It’s hard to believe, but you have the power to choose your thoughts, perceptions, and attitudes. This rewires and changes your brain.

“When you change your brain, it supports you in changing your habits, like the ones that are hurting and not helping you be your best. The more we change our brains, the easier it is to maintain new habits that are more beneficial to us.

“And then the more we practice new habits, the more we change our brain. This is called a positive feedback loop and it’s a pretty amazing and powerful thing. Our brains and bodies can work together to reinforce the change we want to make. And you get to be in charge of that process!!

“The more we work a muscle, the more it develops and strengthens. In the same way, the thoughts and feelings we experience the most will grow the biggest and the strongest. Our brain’s strongest pathways attract the most traffic....like a super expressway or highway.

“What we don’t focus our attention on becomes an unused dirt road. We can choose which pathways we focus on, exercise, and support the most.

“Gratitude helps us rewire our brain for positivity and happiness. It gets us off that negative road and out of that stressful rut.

“Let’s watch a video that further explains how we can change our brains through gratitude.”

Show the video: [Why Practice Gratitude-How it Helps](#).

“So what did you think about what you heard in the video? Take a moment to reflect in your journals.”

Allow for discussion, highlighting the key points of the video.

“Our brain is pretty amazing! And it’s even more amazing to understand the power we have to re-wire and change our brains to make our lives happier and better. One easy way is by practicing gratitude.

“Remember when we are grateful often, we change the neural pathways in our brain creating a new superhighway. We want negative thinking to become an unused dirt road in our brain and we want to get on that positive, grateful superhighway that improves our health and well-being!

“In your journals, draw a picture of a gratitude pathway...it can be a path, a road, a highway, a bridge, a trail. Decorate it with words and images that remind you to be grateful and promote happiness. This drawing is a way to strengthen your gratitude muscles and rewire your brain for positivity....so make this picture reflect that.”

Time permitting, students can share some of their drawings. This can also be done on separate drawing paper and you can provide markers, crayons and colored pencils for this activity.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 3:

Gratitude Gateway

Educator Prep

- Make copies of the 'Gratitude Gateway' worksheet.
- Have art materials available such as crayons, colored pencils, and markers.

Activity

“When forming a new habit, it’s helpful to set reminders to reinforce the new thinking and attitudes, behaviors, and neuropathways throughout the day. One simple way is to create a gratitude gateway-something you pass through frequently that can remind you to practice gratitude.”

“For our class, I am designating our classroom door as a gratitude gateway. Anytime you walk through the door, think about at least one thing that you are grateful for. Let’s get ourselves thinking positively.

“Let’s do it right now. One at a time, I’ll call you to get up, walk out of the room, and re-enter the class. When you do, think of at least one thing you are grateful for....and you must smile. Smiling changes your thinking and attitude right away too!”

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

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

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

Allow a few minutes for students to share their 'Gratitude Gateways'.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness /Self
management

EXTENSION LESSON 4:

Gratitude Symbols

Educator Prep

Prepare [Gratitude Symbols worksheet](#).

Activity

“Practicing gratitude is a quick and easy thing to do, but we are so busy and preoccupied sometimes, that we need to remember and make the time the time to do it. It’s really helpful to have some cues to remind us to stop and be grateful.

“Girls sometimes have charm bracelets with charms/trinkets that remind them of special memories or things that they love. Often, boys and girls wear necklaces with charms or symbols on them again to represent things they love, things that are important to them, things to guide them, such as cross, a heart, a peace sign, a surfboard, a flower, etc.”

“Today we are going to create our own gratitude charms or gratitude symbols, to remind us to be grateful and to cue us to think of specific things that we love and are important to us. I am going to give you a worksheet where you will draw a charm or symbol to represent each of the categories listed. Then you will write down some things you are grateful for that fall under each category.”

Allow students a few minutes to do this activity. They can be shared if time permits.

“Lastly, you have one homework assignment. Research has shown the great benefits of keeping a gratitude journal. So, I’d like you to start one today. Find a small pad or notebook and keep it by your bed. Every evening right before you go to bed, I’d like you to write down at least 3 things that you are grateful for.

“Remember these symbols you create to help you think of things to write down. It can be anything. At first this may be hard or feel silly, but the more you do it, the easier it will become and the more benefits you will receive. These lists will start out small, but over time, you’ll find them growing just as you find your gratitude muscle growing.

“As we talked about before, practicing gratitude rewires our brain, creating new neural pathways that can positively change our outlook and attitude, which in turn helps us make good choices and create new and healthier habits that improve our overall well-being.

“Being mindful at the end of the day is a good way to calm and center ourselves. And practicing gratitude, allows us to end the day on a good note, sending positive messages to our brain. No matter what happened during the day, you can clean the slate and cue gratitude and happiness!”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness
Self-management
Responsible
decision-making

***The following are some good apps for more info and gratitude journal practice that you can share with your students:*

Gratitude Garden App, Gratitude Journal, Mojo, Gratitude Journal 365

EXTENSION LESSON 5:

Gratitude Stones

Educator Prep

Each student will need a small stone, rock, marble or other object for this lesson. You can buy a small bag of stones/colored marbles/shells from the dollar store for this lesson. Or you may take a minute to go outside with your students and let them pick a small stone.

Activity

“It’s important to have cues that remind us to stop to practice gratitude, to make gratitude a habit. You can create a special gratitude screensaver for your phone or other device as a cue. You can even set a special alarm to prompt you to stop what you are doing to practice gratitude. Can you think of any other easy ways to cue us to be grateful and appreciative?”

Make a list of the ideas that students generate.

For the next part of the lesson students will need small stones or marbles. You can provide these or allow students to step outside to find a small stone.

“Today we are going to get another cue or reminder. I am going to let each of you pick a small stone (or other object provided). Make sure you select the one that you really like for whatever reason, perhaps you like the size, shape, color, weight or texture. Your task will be to carry this around with you during the day in your pocket or bag. Make sure you take it out so you can see it and touch it.

“Whenever you see or touch it, let it be a reminder to take pause to think of at least one thing you are thankful for. It can be anything, even the littlest thing.”

“At the end of the day, make sure you take this out and put it at your bedside. At this time, it will remind you to write in your gratitude journal, reflecting on the things that you are thankful for at the end of the day. The next day, you will again put the stone/object in your pocket or bag, somewhere on hand, to go with you throughout the

day. In this way, you will be building in a gratitude cue for your daily use and creating a habit of practicing gratitude.”

“In addition to helping you stop and be grateful, this also provides you with a cue and a way to take a mindful minute.

“This reminds you to get away from whatever is on your mind, and have a chance to focus on the present and be right in the moment. It redirects your focus and attention. This small object can act as a trigger to switch your thinking to something positive, creating and supporting new pathways in your brain.

“The more you use this object as a positive gratitude trigger throughout the day, the more you will find your thinking, your day, and your well-being improves.”

“Right now, let’s take a Mindful Minute. Put your stone in your hand and close your eyes. Let your body be loose and relaxed and your mind be calm. Take a deep gratitude breath, filling your heart and body with warm, fresh breath. Focus on this moment and think of something that you are grateful for right now.

“Take another deep breath, and appreciate this grateful moment you are having.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

EXTENSION LESSON 6:

Gratitude Stroll

Educator Prep

For this activity, you'll be taking a walk with the class. It's best to go outside, so find an area at school where students can go outside for a peaceful stroll. If this is not an option, find an area at school that is the quietest and offers the least distractions.

Activity

“So we know that practicing gratitude has a multitude of benefits for us in all areas of our lives. Who can help us remember some of the benefits of gratitude?” Allow for responses.

“The best thing is that practicing gratitude is something we can do anywhere, anytime, without needing anything to do so. It's so easy and so powerful, if we just remind ourselves to take a minute of pause to be reflective of what we are thankful for. Our lives get busy and crazy and we can lose sight of all of the good as we navigate the challenges and pressures of our lives.

“And let's be honest, we are all guilty of taking what we have for granted.

“So we have to make time, even just a few minutes of time, to stop and be present in the moment. To be mindful. It is then that we can forget about the past and the future, but just appreciate the here and now and the beauty, magic and good that is everywhere.

“Here's a quote that I like by Liam Helmsworth:

Tomorrow doesn't exist. Yesterday is gone. The more I remind myself of that, the happier I feel.

“What do you think he means by that? Do you agree? Why? How could this quote be applied to your life? How does this relate to gratitude?”

Allow for reflection and discussion.

“Today we are going to take a few minutes to be mindful, to be focused on this day, this moment, this place where we are at right now. Well, we are actually going to go outside for a Gratitude Stroll.

“Walking has some amazing benefits. When we walk, we increase endorphins which boosts our mood, we reduce our blood pressure and increase heart health. It’s good exercise increasing our circulation, and it gives us a quick energy boost!

“When we walk with gratitude and mindfulness as our focus, we work wonders in reducing our stress and improving our overall health and well-being.

“Let’s take a few moments to get away from whatever it is that’s in our minds and going on in our lives. Let’s pause, focus, and reflect on some things we are grateful for in this moment, in our surroundings which we often lose sight of or forget to notice. You are going to follow me on our gratitude stroll. Bring your journals with you.

“We are going to take a short stroll and I just want you to take it all in. Put on those gratitude shades and notice the wonder, the beauty, the amazing things all around you to be grateful for.

“Use your 5 senses to really focus on this mindful moment of gratitude. Don’t think of anything at all except the present and what’s around you. Take a few gratitude breaths as you walk around.

“We won’t talk, we will just relax and enjoy this peaceful, grateful moment.”

After a few minutes, have students take a seat. And give them the following instructions:

“I want you to just off the top of your head write down: 5 things you are grateful for that you can SEE, 4 things that you are grateful for that you can TOUCH, 3 things that you are grateful for that you can HEAR, 2 things that you are grateful for that you can SMELL, and one thing that you are grateful for that you can TASTE.”

“How did it feel to just be present in this moment and to notice your surroundings using your 5 senses?”

Allow for reflection and for students to share some of what they wrote down that they are grateful for.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

EXTENSION LESSON 7:

Smile

Educator Prep

Put the following quote on the board: *'A smile is happiness you'll find right under your nose.'* – Tom Wilson

Divide students into groups.

Make a couple copies of the following articles for each group.

Or if you have access to computers, allow students to pull up the following articles on the computer:

- [9 Benefits of Smiling](http://inspiyr.com/9-benefits-of-smiling/) (http://inspiyr.com/9-benefits-of-smiling/)
- [Smiling Benefits](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/08/smiling-benefits_n_6598840.html) (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/08/smiling-benefits_n_6598840.html)
- [15 Health Benefits of Smiling](https://sunwarrior.com/healthhub/15-health-benefits-of-smiling) (https://sunwarrior.com/healthhub/15-health-benefits-of-smiling)
- [7 Benefits of Smiling and Laughing](http://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/7-benefits-smiling-and-laughing.html) (http://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/7-benefits-smiling-and-laughing.html)
- [There's Magic In Your Smile](https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/cutting-edge-leadership/201206/there-s-magic-in-your-smile) (https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/cutting-edge-leadership/201206/there-s-magic-in-your-smile)

Activity

“Read the quote I wrote on the board. What do you think that means? Do you agree? Why?” Allow for responses and reflection.

“I am very grateful for the ability to smile and for receiving smiles. Turn around and smile at a classmate. Now tell me, how did that make you feel to smile? And how did it make you feel when someone smiled at you?”

“It has been said that it takes more muscles to frown than it does to smile. I don't know if it's true or not, but I know that smiling is easy. And though smiling seems like such a simple action, it's really quite powerful and has many benefits. It boosts our mood instantly and creates connections.

“But don’t let me tell you about all of the benefits. Today you are going to break into groups. Your group will have an article on the benefits of smiling.

“Your task will be to do a little research on smiling. Read and review your article and summarize what you’ve learned. You will have a piece of chart paper to use to highlight your findings. Your group will present their findings to the larger class and ‘teach’ your classmates what you’ve learned about smiling.”

Break students into groups and give each group a few copies of an article on smiling. Ideally each group should have a different article. There are links to 5 articles provided. Give each group a piece or two of chart paper for their findings/‘lesson’. If time is a factor, this can be broken into two classes, the first class they research and prepare their presentation and the second class groups ‘teach’ the class.

“Remember a smile costs little, but gives much. Make sure you pepper smiles throughout your day. Smile at yourself in the mirror, share smiles with others, smile for no reason. It will change your outlook and improve your well-being in many ways... it will help connect you to others and it just might make the difference in someone else’s life.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 8:

THE LAUGHTER LOUNGE

Educator Prep

Preview and Cue the following video, '[10 Health Benefits of Laughter](https://youtu.be/K5yClbsdJkg)'
(<https://youtu.be/K5yClbsdJkg>)

Activity

“Wow! We’ve learned a lot through the first two units of the Choose Love Enrichment Program. But we need to take a little break to have some fun. Remember Jesse’s message that he left for his older brother said, ‘Have a lot of fun!’

“Gratitude doesn’t have to be a serious matter! Many of the best moments in our lives that we are most thankful for are filled with smiles and the sound of laughter. Just like gratitude, smiling and laughter are quick and easy ways to boost our happiness.

“Giving thanks, smiling, and having a good chuckle are scientifically proven to make us feel happier and healthier. Did you know that one minute of anger weakens your immune system for 4-5 hours, while one minute of laughter boosts your immune system for over 24 hours? Pretty amazing, and who doesn’t like to smile and laugh?!

“Laughing is fun, but it’s no joke. It really is the one of the best medicines. Not only does it make you feel good, but it’s doing great things for you in a multitude of ways. Let’s watch a video that shows us 10 benefits of laughter.”

Show the following video: [10 Health Benefits of Laughter](https://youtu.be/K5yClbsdJkg).

“There are a lot of reasons to be laughing! Do you think laughter is the best medicine? Why? What are some of the benefits of laughter?”

Take a minute to list some of the benefits on the board. Students can write these in their journals.

“Now let’s make a list in our journal of the things and people in our life that make us laugh. This will be a ‘laughter list’. You can refer to this ‘laughter list’ any time you are in need of some laughter and a quick positive boost or change in mindset.

“Finally, I think we need to get busy laughing to activate some of those benefits we’ve talked about. I’m going to break you into small groups. Your group is going to come up with a skit, song, poem, or comedy routine to share with the class at the ‘Laughter Lounge’.

“We only have a few minutes to get our acts together. If you are having trouble thinking of an act or routine, you may just have to improv.....which means your routine is largely unplanned or unscripted and you just kind of ‘wing it’ !

“Like any great comedian/performer remember to keep your jokes appropriate for your audience and age.

“And audience, even fake laughter is beneficial. It can spur on real laughter and you can feel the same benefits ! So if something isn’t funny to you, fake laugh anyway and see how that positively impacts you. They said that one of the benefits of laughter is that it connects us. Let’s connect with each other in a positive way right now.”

Allow students to spend a couple of minutes

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

EXTENSION LESSON 9:

Turn A Mistake Into Something Great

Educator Prep

It's not necessary, but if you can find the book, "A Big Mistake" by Lenore Rinder or another book on making mistakes it can reinforce this lesson.

Another good book to read is "Beautiful Oops" by Barney Saltzberg.

Also, "Mistakes that Worked- 40 Familiar Inventions and How They Came to Be" by Charlotte Jones has some great examples of mistakes that turned into some of the best inventions we know.

Make copies of the ['Mistake Paper'](#) for all students.

Activity

"Today we are going to talk about mistakes. Many people think that mistakes are bad, what do you all think? I'm going to count to three and when I do, Stomp your feet if you think mistakes are bad, or yell "Woo Hoo" if you think mistakes are good and helpful.

"Those of you that stomped your feet, why do you think mistakes are bad?"

"Those of you who yelled, "Woo Hoo", why do you think mistakes are good or helpful?"

"Mistakes can be good or bad depending on your perspective. Mistakes may seem bad in the moment. And they can be negative and harmful to us, if we can't move past them and learn from them. Some people make a mistake and then they get down on themselves, sending themselves negative messages that bring their confidence down and make them feel like a failure.

"If your confidence is down and you tell yourself, 'I can't do anything right.', 'I messed up again.'...guess what, your brain and self believe it. This makes it hard for you to feel good about yourself and to put your best effort forward.

If you give up on yourself, it's hard to motivate yourself to try and to accomplish anything."

“It takes courage to be ok with making mistakes and to use them to help us succeed.

“When we practice gratitude, we can think of mistakes as a chance to learn, grow, get smarter and stronger....and that allows us to do so.

“Gratitude gives us a optimistic perspective which allows us to see the benefits of mistakes or the positives. Making mistakes can move us to reaching greater heights and accomplishing many things.

“Did you know that some of the best inventions came from mistakes? You know the inkjet printer we use today? Well, an engineer from the Canon company actually made a mistake that led to the creation of the inkjet printer. By accident, he rested his hot iron on his pen. Ink from his pen was ejected a little bit later. And so was born the premise for the inkjet printer! There are so many examples of this....you may want to look online to read about some more of them. They are inspiring stories and remind us that it’s ok to make a mistake.

“In fact, you are going to have a chance to turn your mistake into something great!!”

“I am going to give you a mistake paper.....a paper with a big blob on it. Pretend you were beginning a painting/drawing and you dropped a blob of paint or ink right in the middle of the paper. How do you see the mistake...as something awful, or as something beautiful waiting to happen... an opportunity?

“What are you going to do? Throw a fit, rip up the paper and cry? Shut down, give up and never paint or draw again? No, you are going to say, ‘Oh well, I made a little mistake blob there, but I bet I can turn this mistake into something great.’ And then I want you to do just that! These will probably all look different and that’s ok...in fact, it’s great since there is no ‘right’ way to complete this.

“The most important thing is that you don’t give up and you turn the mistake into something it wasn’t before.....you make it something great! I can’t wait to see your ‘great mistakes!’”

Allow time for students to complete this and then ask for volunteers to share! You will be amazed at their creations. These can be displayed as part of a bulletin board or given to students as a reminder of what can come from a mistake!

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 10:

Hall of Famer

Educator Prep

Preview and Cue the following video clip for the song, '[Hall of Fame](https://youtu.be/qlP52Za_xg)':
(https://youtu.be/qlP52Za_xg)

Activity

“Have you ever put a condition on your life? Like have you ever said, ‘I’ll be happy when...’ or ‘I’ll be grateful when...’? For example, ‘I’ll be happy when this test is over.’ Or ‘I’ll be grateful when I get to go on vacation.’”

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

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

“Let’s watch a video for the song, ‘Hall of Fame’ to get inspired!”

Show the following video: [Hall of Fame](#)

“With a partner, reflect on the song you just heard. How did it make you feel? What message did you get from it? What is your response to the song? How can it be applied to your life?”

Allow a few minutes for students to reflect and respond in their journals. You can also bring it back to the larger group for a class discussion.

“In your journals, write down the first 10 words that come to mind that motivate and inspire you and make you feel like you are in the ‘hall of fame’.”

“You can brighten up your mind, your outlook, your life anytime you want or need to. But don’t wait to feel grateful and happy. You are a hall of famer...but you’ve got to realize it and believe it! Let’s start believing it from this day forward.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 11:

Lessons Learned

Educator Prep

Preview and cue the following music clip for 'Lessons Learned' by Carrie Underwood:
(https://youtu.be/_qYAc4mNe8Q)

Prepare/ distribute the [Opportunities Worksheet](#).

Activity

“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? Can we dance in the rain? Can you?”

“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 may surprise you, but yes!

“Giving thanks even in our darkest moments is a way to cope with the pain, struggle, sadness and anger that we feel at times throughout our lives. Nothing is certain in life and many times we are faced with situations that are challenging and seem impossible to overcome.

“We have made and will continue to make mistakes, have missteps, and experience failure on our journey. Sometimes it may seem like we are taking 2 steps forward only to take 5 steps back. We will constantly be faced with problems, situations, and experiences that challenge and test us. The journey of life isn't always easy.

“How will we respond? 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?”

“Remember, we can't always choose what happens to us, but we can always choose how we respond. Instead of focusing on the daunting uphill climb that lies ahead, we need to stop and be thankful for the journey each step of the way.

“When we fall down, we brush off and get back up with strength and purpose and are thankful for the lessons learned. Having an attitude of gratitude gives us the ability to shift our perspective and mindset and reframe our situations, adopting a positive attitude that inspires us. Showing gratitude can have INSTANT results, making us feel just a little bit better when we need it most.”

Play the following video/music clip: [Lessons Learned](#).

“Take a moment to react to this song in your journals. How does it make you feel? Does it inspire you? In what ways? How does it relate to our talk of gratitude? How does it relate to courage? How could you apply the message in this song to your life?”

Allow time for the class to reflect and discuss these questions.

“Life is full of ups and downs and the way you respond to the ups and downs ultimately determines how your life will go. Remember life is not so much what happens to you, but how you respond to what happens to you. You always get to choose how you respond. And a lot of how you respond depends on how you perceive things. Do you see the cloud or the silver lining, the problem/challenge/failure or the lesson learned?”

“When you have an ‘attitude of gratitude’, you are able to see the positive in what may seem like a negative. You can see the silver lining in the cloud. This allows you to feel good, persevere, and succeed, even in the face of adversity.

“Remember gratitude is like a super power that changes how you see things and those changes in perception empower and inspire you!

Using the Opportunities worksheet, write down some mistakes, failures and/or some adversities that you’ve faced in the first column. Then in the second column, find the silver lining in these things. Change your perception and write down the good that came from them, the lessons learned.”

Time permitting, students can then share these with a partner or in small groups.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness / Self-management/ Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 12:

Be A Glow Stick

Educator Prep

Prepare the [Lessons Learned and Glowstick \(digital only\) Worksheets](#).

Put the following quote on the board:

'It's OK to be a glow stick- sometimes we need to break before we shine.'

- Author Unknown

Activity

“Read the quote I’ve written on the board. It sounds kind of funny to compare yourself to a glow stick, but it has a very powerful meaning. What is your reaction to this quote? What do you think the author was trying to say? How can you apply this to your life?”
Allow for some responses and reflection.

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

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

“Let’s start creating a growth mindset. This means we believe we can achieve, learn, and be successful, developing our skills and talents through dedication and hard work.

“We believe that we are never stuck where we are. We are able to be resilient, that is, be strong, withstand, and bounce back in the face of adversity.

“Even more, we believe in our ability to persevere and not just bounce back but move past our challenges. With a growth mindset, we have a love of learning and always look for the lessons that will move us forward and help us become our best

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

Invite the students to complete the following sentences on their Lessons Learned worksheet.

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

Allow for students to share some of their responses.

"To end this lesson, let's highlight some of the ways in which we 'glow'. Draw a glowstick (or use the Digital Worksheet version) and inside, write down some of the ways you shine. What are some of your strengths that will get you through difficult times?"

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness
Self-management
Responsible
decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 13:

Thank You in 29 Languages

Educator Preparation

Preview and cue the following video: [‘How to Say Thank You in 29 Languages’](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvD_8DQte3k):
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvD_8DQte3k)

Prepare a copy of the [language chart](#) for each student.

Activity

“Expressing gratitude is a universal philosophy. No matter what country you come from, religion you believe in or language you speak, we can all find things to be thankful for and express gratitude. And we can all reap the benefits. Showing gratitude helps keep your outlook positive and improves your physical health and psychological well-being.”

“Today we are going to remind ourselves to be thankful by learning how to say thank you in many different languages. Let’s start out by giving a shout out of thanks. On the count of three, I want you to yell, ‘Thank You’. One, two, three.....”

“Let’s watch a video that shows us how to say thank you in 29 languages. As you watch the video, let’s say each word after they do so we can practice speaking another language.”

Show the following video: [‘How to Say Thank You in 29 Languages](#)

“Pretty cool, right? What way of saying thank you did you like the best?” Allow students to share the country/language they liked. See if anyone can remember how to say thank you in a different language.

“I think we need a little more practice saying thank you. With a partner you are going to practice your willingness to learn by expressing your thanks in different languages.

“I am going to give you a chart that has the word for thank you in many different languages, just like we just saw in the video. Try saying thank you in each language.

“Notice the phonetic spelling in the right column to give you an idea of what the word should sound like. Read through all of them, and then practice your favorites.”

Allow time for a few students to share the thank you’s that they have learned to say in a different language.

“Gratitude means giving thanks. We have lots of reasons to be thankful and now we have many ways to say, ‘thank you’. Starting today, say thank you more often....think it in your mind, say it to yourself, and of course, say it to those around you.

“‘Thank you’ are two little words that are very powerful.... they can bring joy and inspiration to you and others and create connections. If you are feeling really ambitious, try to memorize a few and teach them to your siblings, friends or parents”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Social awareness

Relationship skills

EXTENSION LESSON 14:

Gratitude Quilt

Educator Prep

Preview and cue the following video: [A Very Happy Brain](https://youtu.be/GZZ0zpUQhBQ). (<https://youtu.be/GZZ0zpUQhBQ>) Prepare a 5x5" piece of paper for each student (or utilize the digital worksheet.) Provide markers, crayons, pipe cleaners, confetti, glue, etc for decoration of the quilt pieces.

Activity

"We are going to watch a short video called, 'A Very Happy Brain'. Wouldn't you like a 'very happy brain'? I know I would like one. Let's learn a little more about how our brains work and how we can have a 'very happy brain'." Show the following video: [A Very Happy Brain](https://youtu.be/GZZ0zpUQhBQ).

"What do you think about what you just heard? What stood out to you the most? What did you learn?" Allow for reflection and discussion.

"There were a few things that I learned. It sounds like having gratitude and compassion can make you happier. Gratitude and Compassion make you feel safe and worthy which promotes happiness. And when we have a happy brain and do something meaningful, creative or altruistic, we become even happier!"

"Instead of searching for happiness, we should be in the pursuit of gratitude and compassion which will bring us to happiness!"

"A few lines really stood out to me...'start seeing strangers as brothers' and 'help others feel safe and cherished, the joys in your brain will surely flourish...start with the one a breath away, in this moment, now today.'"

"Let's do just that. Think of someone a 'breath away' that you can show compassion to. Who is that stranger that you could start seeing as a brother? How could you reach out to them and help them feel safe and cherished?"

Respond to these questions in your journal and make a plan to connect with this individual or more than one individual in a compassionate way." Give students a few minutes to reflect and respond in their journals.

“Next, we are going to create a ‘Gratitude Quilt’. I will give each of you a 5 x 5 square of paper. I’d like you to decorate this square to illustrate with words, drawings, and colors what gratitude means to you.

“We will put all of these squares together and create a ‘Gratitude Quilt’. As a class, we will decide where we will hang this quilt as a creative and meaningful act of gratitude and compassion to share positivity and happiness with others at school.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 15:

Multiply Gratitude

Educator Prep

None.

Activity

“Ok, so you aren’t a celebrity or famous.....yet. But through the Choose Love Enrichment Program, you are learning a formula for Choosing Love which gives you some important tools and skills to help you be your best and to be a success in who you are and all that you do.

“Who knows where your journey may take you?! If you believe, like many do, in the law of attraction...that means you believe that what you put out there comes back to you, or what you focus on expands.

“So let’s put out some positive energy and let’s focus on being a light to others. You may not have the money and power of a celebrity, but you can make a difference right here and right now, with that you have. How can you positively impact others through small, but meaningful ways?

“Let’s brainstorm some ways that you can give back and help others right now. How can you make a difference? How can we, as a class, make a difference?”

As a class or in small groups, have students create a list of all the ways that they can give back, help others, and spread positivity, kindness and love. Encourage them to explore actions that could be taken as individuals or part of a group, i.e. as a class, and to expand their focus of impact from their immediate circle (family, friends) to the school community and the community at large.

For example, one group of Choose Love middle schoolers created “Have An Awesome Day!” signs and stood at a busy intersection of their town on a Saturday and displayed their signs to all the cars that drove by. They got lots of smiles and beeps, and one woman pulled over and told their teacher that this was her third time driving by because she felt so good the first time and she just wanted more of the positivity! It’s a terrific example not only of how easy and fun it can be to do something that makes others feel

good, but also of how hugely anyone can positively impact just ONE person's day as a result.

“Now in your journals, let's make a Top Ten list. Write the Top Ten ways from the lists we've generated today, that you can help others, spread positivity, and give back.

“Remember, every little effort makes a difference and creates a ripple effect to reach farther than you can imagine. Giving helps the giver and receiver! Set the intention to start doing these things and see how you can make a difference in the lives of others and world around you. See what comes back to you and how your life is positively impacted and your feelings of gratitude multiply!”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making



Grade 8 | [FORGIVENESS](#) | Overview

GRADE 8, 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: All About Forgiveness

Lesson 2: The Science of Forgiveness

Lesson 3: The Emotional Station

Lesson 4: I Forgive Me

Lesson 5: I Forgive You

Lesson 6: Reflecting on Forgiveness

EXTENSION LESSONS

Ext. Lesson 1: More on the Science of Forgiveness

Ext. Lesson 2: The Gift of Forgiveness

Ext. Lesson 3: Cutting The Cord

Ext. Lesson 4: Forgiveness Breath

Ext. Lesson 5: Forgiveness Pose

Ext. Lesson 6: More Mindful Minutes

Ext. Lesson 7: Anger Awareness

Ext. Lesson 8: The Mountain & The Big Oak Tree

Ext. Lesson 9: Goodbye Anger

Ext. Lesson 10: Sharing Gifts

Ext. Lesson 11: The Forgiveness Journey

Ext. Lesson 12: How The Light Gets In

Ext. Lesson 13: Forgiveness Poems

Ext. Lesson 14: Forgiveness Web

Ext. Lesson 15: Letter To Scarlett



Lesson 1: All About 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: The Science of Forgiveness

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Create and demonstrate a Forgiveness pose➤ Analyze the brain-hand model➤ Connect the brain-hand model with forgiveness➤ Discuss the benefits of forgiveness➤ Synthesize the benefits of forgiveness on cognitive, social, physical aspects of personal life	<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 have already shown a brain hand model video in the Courage Unit, but it would be beneficial to show one again for review if you feel it would be beneficial. Listed is a new one you can show to students. In addition, you have Dr. Dan Seigel’s Brain Hand Model video from the Courage Unit you could show. Preview and cue:
 - Three Parts of the Brain Hand Model - by Dr. Russ Harris: <https://youtu.be/5CpRY9-MIHA>
 - Dr. Dan Seigel Brain Hand Model: <https://youtu.be/gm9CI174Oxw>

- 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 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.

“In the Choose Love Program, we’ve talked a lot about mindfulness, or the practice of focusing our awareness on the present moment. When we are mindful, we are focused and fully aware of our thoughts, feelings, and body signs.”

“Today we are going to see what happens to our brains when we feel angry, frustrated, or upset.”

“Do you remember our three brains: the lizard, numbat, and human brains? Our lizard, numbat, and human brains respond to anger, just like they respond to fear.”

Optional: “Let’s review by watching a video about the three parts of the brain and the brain hand model.”

Cue the video, ‘Three Parts of the Brain by Dr. Russ Harris: <https://youtu.be/5CpRY9-MIHA>

“Let’s practice doing the brain hand model again so we really understand it.”

Open up your hand and hold it up to show students the hand model again as you describe the parts of the brain. You should have the four fingers up, and your thumb against your palm facing the students.

“Remember in our hand model, your wrist and palm represents your lizard brain, which regulates breathing, heart rate, and body temperature. It helps us stay alert and reactive to our environment. It controls balance, coordination, and reflexes. It’s the part that makes us react impulsively sometimes. It’s the area that causes most of those anger cues, or body signs that let us know when intense feelings are taking over. When we take deep breaths, we are using this part of our brain to calm down.”

“The thumb of your hand is the numbat brain, which is responsible for emotions and social behavior. It strongly influences our behavior and can make us feel like we are on a roller coaster. When we feel very angry, it can take time to calm down and reset. We use this part of the brain when we calm down by naming our feelings and recognizing how our body is responding to them.”

“When you make a fist wrapping your fingers over your thumb, the rest of your hand is the human brain, which helps you think clearly and problem-solve. This part of the brain is responsible for imagination, learning, thought, and planning. We use this part of our brain when we imagine/visualize, write in our journals, draw, say affirmations, or think through a situation before acting.” Wrap your fingers around your thumb to form a fist and point to your front fingers.

You can even hold your hand up like this next to your forehead to highlight.

Then, flip up your fingers.

“When we feel anger or other intense emotions, our fingers get far away from our thumb! We are ‘flipping our lid’! When we do this, it is hard for the three parts of our brain to talk to each other and work together because they are so far apart. This may be why we can easily be overwhelmed or overpowered by anger and other challenging feelings.....we find it hard to focus, learn, sit still, breathe, and more.”

“In order to deal with these intense emotions, we can use a variety of mindfulness techniques that we’ve learned such as breathing, visualizing and our poses. We can also use self talk to help us reframe our thinking.”

“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

Share the brain hand model with a family member or friend. How does the brain-hand model connect to the third ingredient of the Choose Love formula, forgiveness? What benefits do you experience when your human brain is in the driver’s seat and you’re able to forgive someone or yourself?



Lesson 3: The Emotion Station

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Identify anger cues or body signs➤ Discover personal emotional triggers➤ Synthesize personal top three emotional triggers➤ Explain personal top three emotional triggers➤ Generate ways to manage emotional triggers➤ Discuss anger and connect to control and personal power.➤ Cite healthy ways to deal with and let go of anger and other strong emotions➤ Identify ways to cope with anger➤ Examine a closed fist and open fist anger analogy	<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, [‘Why Do We Lose Control of Our Emotions?’](https://youtu.be/3bKuoH8CkFc): (<https://youtu.be/3bKuoH8CkFc>)
- Display the following on a smartboard or write on the board/ distribute the digital/printable *Emotional Triggers* worksheet.

Being Accepted	Being Respected	Being Liked
Being Understood	Feeling needed	Being Valued
Being in Control	Being Right	Being Treated Fairly
Getting Attention	Being Comfortable	Being Free
Feeling Peaceful	Feeling Included	Being Independent

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.”

“Emotions can be very powerful. It’s easy to get overwhelmed by feelings, and as a result make choices 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.”

“Let’s watch a video about our emotions. It will explain how our brain works, how we respond to feelings, why we lose control, and some ways that we can recover control over our emotions and responses.”

Show students the following video: [Why Do We Lose Control of Our Emotions](#)

After watching the video, allow students to reflect and discuss. Some questions to ask: Did you learn something new about your brain? About your feelings? What can you do to have better control over your emotions? Why is it important to manage your feelings?

“We all have events, objects, situations that make us feel a variety of emotions. Let’s concentrate on anger or being upset. Who is brave enough to share something that makes

them angry or upset? I'll go first." Give an example of something that makes you particularly emotional...label how you feel and what makes you feel this way. For example, I feel really angry when someone interrupts me. Then allow a few students to share their responses.

"In your journals, make a list of the things that make you particularly angry, upset, or emotional in some way. You can list them together or separate them into lists, like the things that make me upset, the things that make me angry, etc. "

"In addition to the big and little things that make us emotional, we experience something called emotional triggers. Emotional triggers are feelings that seem to pop out of nowhere - something small happens and all of a sudden you are in the middle of an emotional tornado!"

"Why do you think it would be helpful to know your emotional triggers? What could you do with this knowledge?" Allow time for students to respond.

"Understanding emotional triggers can help us make sense of our feelings and gain better control over our reactions. Emotional triggers are usually related to some past feelings that we stuffed away and didn't deal with, so the feelings keep popping up. Each time they do, the feelings get stronger and more difficult to manage. (Reynolds, 2015)"

"Looking at the list on the board, think about the top three items from this list that, if not met, could trigger a reaction in you."

"What are your top three Emotional Triggers? Why did you choose these triggers and why do you think they are so important to you? Let's take a moment to think about our answers and we can write or discuss your reactions and responses."

"Now, let's write down or brainstorm some ways by which you can manage these emotional triggers."

Allow students time to explore these emotional triggers through written reflection as well as discussion. Use the *Emotional Triggers* worksheet as necessary. Then have students discuss with a partner or in small groups.

"We have to have a toolkit for how to cope, let go of anger, emotional triggers and other strong emotions, so that we can be in control and have our personal power. When we handle anger and other strong emotions effectively, we can better choose how we respond and act and do so in positive, healthy ways."

“What are some things you do or have seen others do that are positive, healthy ways to deal with anger?” Allow for responses and continue to add to the list.

“When someone hurts us, we feel angry, sad, frustrated, and other strong emotions. We become like the closed 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 positively, if at all, with others. A closed fist signifies hatred, anger, negativity, and disconnection.”

“Right now on your hand, I want you to write, with your finger, ways that you can effectively deal with anger and let go of it. Use some of the ideas on our list. How can you say goodbye to anger in a healthy way?”

Call to Action

Share the emotional triggers chart with a family member or friends. What are their top three triggers? Are you aligned with them? Why or why not? What experiences made them pick their top three triggers?



Lesson 4: I Forgive Me

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Define self forgiveness
- Analyze 'The Critical Inner Voice'
- Reframe the inner critic's voice by changing negative self-talk into positive self-talk
- Discuss the importance of letting go and connect to self-forgiveness
- Illustrate/write personal inner critic and inner critic statements
- Practice letting go by creating inner paper airplanes and releasing
- Cite the seven steps to self-forgiveness
- Create a mini book to reinforce the seven steps to self forgiveness

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

- Cue the following video clip, '**The Critical Inner Voice.**' You will be showing this video until it is 1:20 in. (<https://youtu.be/uWc4pZhnpOw>)
- Distribute 1 blank sheet of paper to each student.
- Prepare/distribute *Letting Go* (digital/printable worksheet.)

- You may choose to take students outside for this activity.

Lesson

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

“For the next few lessons, we are going to be talking about a different kind of forgiveness. That is, forgiving ourselves, or self-forgiveness. This is a very important form of forgiveness. If we don’t forgive ourselves for the mistakes we’ve made, the hurts we’ve caused, and the wrongs we’ve done, how can we expect to forgive anyone else? The truth is, often it’s harder to forgive yourself.”

“Everyone makes mistakes. It’s important to have the courage to acknowledge our mistakes. We can even be grateful for them. Yes, you heard me, you can feel grateful for your mistakes, as they are actually opportunities for you to grow and learn more about yourself, others, and the world around you.”

“Often when we make mistakes we feel frustrated or angry at ourselves. Sometimes we feel so frustrated and angry at ourselves for a mistake, that we get stuck in a cycle of negative self-talk. We beat ourselves up over the mistake and can start thinking that everything we do is bad. That negative voice speaks more often, and gets louder and meaner. This negative self-talk clouds our minds and thoughts, and weighs heavy on our hearts, making us feel worse. It can also negatively affect everything we do and the relationships we have with others.”

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

Play the following video for the first 1:20: [The Critical Inner Voice](#)

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

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

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

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

“Give me some help on these:

Call out the following and have students volunteer a way to reframe the negative talk. You can add more statements...

- ‘Don’t wear that or they’ll make fun of you...’ • ‘People won’t like you if you _____.’
- ‘Don’t try so hard, it’s not cool.’
- ‘You’re not good enough to_____.’
- ‘You really messed up. You can’t do anything right.’ • ‘Another mistake. You are really stupid.’
- ‘Nobody likes you.’
- ‘You can’t do it, so don’t even bother trying.’
- ‘You are the worst friend. Why would anyone want to be friends with you?’

“Now, draw a picture of your inner critic on this piece of paper. Write down some common phrases, negative comments, or criticisms that you may hear it say. Practice reframing that negative self-talk to positive, self-affirming statements that will inspire and empower you!”

“Now that we’ve examined our inner critic, we are going to practice letting go so we can move forward. Holding on to all of this negativity is exhausting and it doesn’t serve us well.”

Utilize *Letting Go* worksheet for instructions on how to fold a paper airplane.

“Take your inner critic paper and fold it to make a paper airplane.”

Allow students to create their airplanes. Then, on your cue, students will be allowed to fly them around for a minute or two to illustrate letting go. You can even have students try to fly their planes into the garbage. Finally, any that have not ended up in the garbage will be thrown away.

“Before we can forgive others, we have to be able to forgive ourselves. Forgiving yourself means letting go of negativity. When we do so, we free ourselves up for positivity...we allow ourselves to feel good and happy, which allows us to move forward with confidence.”

“Let's learn some ways we can forgive ourselves and move forward. I am going to give you a sheet called 'How to Forgive Yourself,' which has seven tips for forgiving yourself.

Read each of these steps to students. End the class with a discussion on the seven steps and what resonates with them the most.

How to Forgive Yourself

1. Nobody's Perfect. Nobody. Accept yourself and your flaws. What can you do to improve yourself?
2. Remember that you are not a bad person. Your choices and actions might have been bad, but you are not bad. Remind yourself of your strengths and all that you have to be grateful for.
3. Your feelings and thoughts are not always true and they do not define you. Do things to cope with your feelings in healthy ways.
4. Talk back to your internal voice, your inner critic. Change negative self-talk to positive self-talk.
5. Talk to someone who inspires and motivates you. Let them help you to change your perspective - from pessimist to optimist, from glass half-empty to glass half-full.
6. Do the best friend test. If this happened to your friend, what would you tell them? How would you encourage them? How would you advise them?
7. Turn the problem into an opportunity. What can you learn from this? How can you grow from this?

Call to Action

Take the seven ways to forgive yourself and make them into a mini book. Illustrate each page with a visual to remind you of the steps. Keep the book handy in case you need to remember that everyone makes mistakes and you are worth forgiving!



Lesson 5: I Forgive You

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Reflect on different aspects of forgiveness relative to a personal situation
- Cite the seven steps to forgiveness
- Apply the seven steps to a typical personal scenario
- Create a personalized mini book chapter on the seven steps to forgiving others

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

CSED

- Moral Character
- Performance Character
- Intellectual Character

SEL

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

- Give students a small mirror or have them pretend that their hand is a mirror to reflect their image. Note: there is also a *Mirror of Forgiveness* digital/printable worksheet that you might choose to incorporate into the lesson.
- Write the following 'Steps to Forgiveness' on the board or display them.
 - Acknowledge your own inner pain.
 - Express those emotions in non-hurtful ways without yelling or attacking.
 - Protect yourself from further victimization.

- Try to understand the point of view and motivations of the person to be forgiven; re- place anger with compassion.
- Forgive yourself for your role in the relationship.
- Decide whether to remain in the relationship.
- Perform the overt act of forgiveness verbally or in writing. If the person is unreachable, you can still write down your feelings in letter form. (Ponton, 2015)

Lesson

“We’ve spoken about how practicing forgiveness is a choice you make that restores your personal power as you let go of negative emotions that you are tied to and weighed down by. Sometimes it may be easy to forgive, while other times it may be more challenging.”

“Forgiving takes courage and compassion...and it’s a process. And it’s important to remember that forgiveness doesn’t mean that you condone the negative behavior or even that you forget about it. Just because you forgive doesn’t mean that someone isn’t held accountable for their actions...they still have to face consequences or make amends...but that’s on them. You are just taking control of your response and freeing yourself as you practice forgiveness.”

Reference the 7 steps to forgiving someone on the board.

1. Acknowledge your own inner pain.
2. Express those emotions in non-hurtful ways without yelling or attacking.
3. Protect yourself from further victimization.
4. Try to understand the point of view and motivations of the person to be forgiven; re- place anger with compassion.
5. Forgive yourself for your role in the relationship.
6. Decide whether to remain in the relationship.
7. Perform the overt act of forgiveness verbally or in writing. If the person is unreachable, you can still write down your feelings in letter form. (Ponton, 2015)

“Today we will ‘reflect’ on forgiveness. We use a mirror because forgiveness is something we ultimately do for ourselves. While we may positively impact someone’s life by forgiving them, most importantly, forgiveness frees us from negativity and draws us towards positivity, towards love and acceptance. Forgiveness is when we reflect on our

own feelings and thoughts and make the choice to let go of all that is weighing us down, holding us back, and keeping us stuck and unable to live and move forward in a healthy, positive way.

Hand out mirrors or have students use their hands to mimic a mirror.

“Look in the mirror. First, think of someone who may have done something to you that you are having a hard time forgiving. Reflect on it and remember when and where it happened. Talk through that event/situation/hurt in the mirror.”

“Next, try to empathize with the other person. Think about what may be causing them to act this way. Try to put yourself in their shoes and better understand the reasons for their actions. You are not condoning the ways they have hurt or wronged you, but simply trying to better understand their choices and actions. Write down what you think the reason might be and take a moment to feel empathy towards the person.”

“After that, think about how you can deeply forgive them...not because you have to, but because you want to. Remember no one is perfect...you may have done something similar to someone else in your life. Talk about how/why you forgive them in the mirror.”

“How do you feel you will benefit from practicing forgiveness? Think about what expectations you might have about forgiving. Maybe you are expecting an apology. Maybe you are expecting something to change. Let go of those expectations. Forgive them knowing that it may change nothing on their side but it will change a lot for you.”

“Next, decide how you will forgive. Will it be in person, in a letter or note, via text or email? Think about what you are going to say. Maybe you will say nothing at all...but in your heart and mind you know that you will forgive and move on. It’s your choice.”

Allow for students to share and respond to the mirror process that they just engaged in. You may choose to share a personal story of forgiveness and how you are going to move forward as well.

Call to Action

Take the seven ways to forgive someone and add them into the mini book from the previous lesson as a new chapter. Illustrate each page with a visual to remind you of the steps. Keep the book handy in case you need to remember that everyone makes mistakes and you have the choice to forgive to maintain your personal power!



Lesson 6: Reflecting on 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.

Forgiveness Web: One student will hold the ball of string/yarn and start by saying something they have learned about forgiveness or something that impacted them in this unit. Think about what stood out to you, the power of forgiveness, a skill you’ve learned, something that you will do moving forward. The person with the string will share this nugget. 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. This is our Forgiveness Web.

Discuss how the Forgiveness Web illustrates how we are all connected in many ways, one of which is that we all can forgive and be forgiven. Remind students that forgiveness benefits both the giver and the receiver. Forgiveness helps build and strengthen connections with others. When we practice forgiveness, we can improve our relationship with ourselves and others. When students let go of the string/yarn, the web falls apart, which symbolizes how we are more and have more when we forgive and when we connect with one another.

“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

Find a small 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. Write the word forgive or forgiveness on it and then decorate it as you wish. After, take it with you as a reminder to practice forgiveness and to remember the power of forgiveness.



Grade 8 | FORGIVENESS | Extension Lessons

EXTENSION LESSON 1 :

More On The Science of Forgiveness

Educator Preparation

- Write the heading on the board, 'Benefits of Forgiveness'. This will be used to generate a list.
- Preview and cue the following video, '[Nelson Mandela and the Science of Forgiveness](https://youtu.be/FyC-Zma75Aw)': (<https://youtu.be/FyC-Zma75Aw>)
- There are many articles that discuss the benefits of forgiveness. Below are three good ones. You can review these to get more information. They can also be shared with your students. You can extend this lesson or make it a homework or extra credit opportunity. Students can review an article individually or in small groups and write a summation or present their findings to the class.
 - http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/25/forgiveness-health-benefits_n_6029736.html
 - <https://www.wisdomtimes.com/blog/health-benefits-of-forgiveness/>
 - <http://inspiyr.com/health-benefits-of-forgiveness/>

Activity

"Let's get started today with a Mindful Minute. Find a comfortable position to sit, and close your eyes. Focus your attention for one minute on something that makes you feel better when you are down. Think about something that uplifts you."

"Remember we said that when someone understands the benefit of doing something, they are more apt to do it. We're just getting started talking about the importance of forgiveness and how it can help and uplift us. Today, we are going to look a little closer at the science of forgiveness. Not only does forgiveness make you feel better, but there is science that proves that. 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.

"We are going to watch a video called, 'Nelson Mandela and the Science of Forgiveness.' While you are watching, take note of the many benefits of practicing forgiveness. Forgiveness doesn't just feel good, it actually is scientifically proven to improve your health and well-being in a multitude of ways."

Show the following video: [Nelson Mandela and the Science of Forgiveness](#)

"Take a minute to reflect on and react to the video we just watched. What surprised you? What did you learn? What stood out to you?"

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

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

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 2:

The Gift of Forgiveness

Educator Preparation

- Prepare/distribute the Gift Box digital/printable worksheet for each student.
- Have markers, crayons, and colored pencils available for students to use for the Gift Boxes.

Activity

“Stomp your feet if you think forgiveness is a gift.”

“Clap your hands if you think forgiveness is something you do for others.”

“Lastly, stand up and yell ‘Woo Hoo’ if you think forgiveness is a gift that you give yourself.”

“Forgiveness is a gift. It is a gift that you give to someone else. How does it feel when someone forgives you?”

“But forgiveness is most importantly a gift that you give to yourself. It allows you to cut the cord to pain, anger, sadness, resentment, and all of the hurtful and challenging feelings you may have as a result of what someone has done to you or because of something wrong you may have done. It lightens your load and frees you from negativity.”

“In what other ways might forgiveness be a gift?” Answers may include: you feel better, the other person feels better, you repair a relationship, you can move forward, you can focus on other things, it frees you up to achieve your goals/dreams, it allows you to not waste your time and energy, it makes you more courageous, it gives you confidence, it gives you something to feel grateful for, etc.

“Forgiveness also is a gift in that it builds bridges and connections where there once was a divide and separation. Forgiveness is an important part of the Choose Love Formula. We can’t choose love without forgiveness. Forgiveness truly is a gift that keeps on giving.”

“Please notice the gift box on the worksheet I distributed. Now, inside the gift box write down all the ways in which forgiving yourself and others will be helpful to you and

positively impact your life. How will forgiving change your life for the better? How will it make you feel? How will practicing forgiveness affect your thoughts, feelings, actions, and choices? Write down all of these positives, these 'gifts' that you will receive when you choose to forgive. I'd also like you to decorate your gift box....choose images, colors, and words that highlight the beauty and power of forgiveness."

Allow time for students to do this.

"Just writing these things down can help you start your journey toward forgiveness. Let's end today with an affirmation that we can say aloud together. Let's say this, 'I am choosing to forgive because it is a gift to myself and others. Forgiving will make my life and the world around me better.'"

As a class, say this affirmation a few times. You can ask students how they feel after saying this and beginning to think about the choice and gift of forgiveness and how it can positively impact their lives.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

EXTENSION LESSON 3:

Cutting the Cord

Educator Preparation

You may choose to have a rope/cord to illustrate cutting the cord.

Activity

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

“Believe it or not, it is the healthiest thing you can do. Forgiveness means you let go of the anger you feel toward that person. This allows you to feel happy and good so that you can choose love and move forward in your life.”

“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!”

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

“Right now, 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? Does it allow you to do the things that you need and want to do? Does it make life more challenging?”

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

“Let's stand up and act this out. Pretend you are tied to another person. We can do this by locking arms with a partner. Take turns walking around the room being the one responsible for carrying the other person with you, like you are dragging that person around with you. This is what it's like to hold a grudge and carry anger and resentment.”

“Good! Now, take out your imaginary scissors and pretend to cut that cord. Now walk around the room like you have just let go of a huge burden, like you are free from the dead weight. How do you feel now?”

“Of course, 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. Then 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, hurts, and frustrations is the first step in practicing forgiveness.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 4:

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 bodies 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. It can help us drop the weight and the burden of challenging feelings.”

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

Show 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 5:

Forgiveness Pose

Educator Preparation

- Preview school psychologist [Amy Cuddy's TED talk](#) about how your body language shapes who you are and helps you manage feelings and thoughts in a powerful and positive way. You may choose to show some or all of the video to your students as part of this lesson or an extension of this lesson.
(https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are?language=en#)
- Create your own Forgiveness Pose. A Forgiveness Pose is similar to a Courage Pose in that you are shaping your body to express forgiveness and align your body with your emotions in a positive, peaceful way. •
- Additionally, you may choose to read the [Harvard research article on the benefits of power posing before high stakes social evaluations](#).
(<https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/9547823/13-027.pdf?sequence=1>)

Activity

“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.”

“Let me show you my Forgiveness Pose.” Show students your pose. It’s ok if students still feel uncomfortable doing this. Your modeling will help facilitate this activity and the more you practice and use these the more comfortable students will become in using them. So encourage and prompt students to use them.

“Everyone take a minute to find a sitting or standing pose that helps you to feel open, relaxed, peaceful, receptive, and forgiving. Typically, you might spread your arms out wide, open your hands instead of having them closed or in a fist. You may place a hand over your heart. You may make a peace sign gesture. Your body should be comfortable and relaxed, not rigid and tense. Try out a few poses before deciding which one feels best to

you. Make sure you can hold your pose for at least one minute without getting hurt or tired.” Give students a few minutes to find a pose.

“Let’s practice holding your Forgiveness Pose together. First we’ll try holding for 15 seconds. Ready, go!”

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

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

EXTENSION LESSON 6:

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 7:

Anger Awareness

Educator Preparation

- Write the following headings on the board: 'Pinches' and 'Crunches'. These will be the start of lists generated.
- Write the following heading on the board: 'Anger Cues'. This will be the start of a list generated.
- Prepare/distribute a copy of the *Anger Cues* digital/printable worksheet for each student.

Activity

“When someone hurts or betrays us, we usually experience anger, sadness, and hurt. But usually, at some point, the feeling that takes over is anger. 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 a ‘pinch.’ These are small irritations or annoyances that are like a level 3 on an anger scale of 1 to 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 this level of anger might be: displeased, irked, bothered, impatient, or irritated. What kinds of things are low on the anger scale for you? What are your pinches? Write them in your journals.” Allow students to write these in their journals.

Invite students to share. Make a list of these under the heading, 'Anger Pinches'.

“Something I feel angrier about is...(give example). I might use the following words to describe a medium intensity of anger: troubled, disgruntled, insulted, or resentful. What kinds of things are medium on your anger scale? Write these in your journal.”

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.

"When you are experiencing a crunch, you may feel very strong feelings of anger and the desire to be rigid in your stance or feelings. You may question whether or not you want to continue to be in a relationship with the person you're experiencing the crunch with."

"When we are aware of situations, circumstances, and things that may spark certain levels of anger in us, we can approach them more mindfully and make better decisions about how we handle them."

"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."

"But 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 to 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. Why do you think recognizing your anger and picking up on your anger cues would be beneficial to you?"

Allow for responses.

"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 of our anger cues."

Brainstorm as a class the various body signs, or 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. You can make a list on the board or you can do the outline of a body on the board and draw

them onto the figure. This will allow students to see the many ways their whole body gives them cues when they feel angry.

“Now I’d like you to complete the ‘Anger Cues’ worksheet. You will be identifying the body signs, or anger cues, you have as you experience pinches and as you become angrier, moving to crunch levels of anger. How is your body trying to alert you to anger and increases in anger that are moving you to flipping your lid and making poor choices?”

“Remember, not everyone feels anger and other emotions in the same way. Your anger cues, the signs your body gives you when you are getting angry, may be very different from someone else and that’s okay. The important thing is to recognize your cues. When you can be aware of how you’re feeling and alert yourself to anger in this way, you can do something to calm down before you blow your top, flip your lid, or erupt like a volcano.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 8:

The Mountain & The Big Oak Tree

Educator Preparation

This lesson involves mindfulness exercises, specifically two body poses: the Mountain and the Big Oak Tree. You can find instructions and more exercises like these in the Extension Programs section of this course, online, under [Zensational Kids](#).

(<https://chooselovemovement.org/lesson/zensational-kids-gr8/>)

There are two digital/printable worksheets, *Mountain Pose Activity* and *Peaceful Warrior Activity*, that you may wish to use with this lesson. Or you can simply have students write in their journals.

Activity

“We’ve talked about the importance of being aware of our feelings. It is only when we can recognize how we are feeling that we can then do something to manage the powerful feelings before they escalate.”

“Today we are going to practice two body poses to help us calm ourselves and focus so that we can make healthy choices. One is the Mountain Pose. It brings awareness into the body and breath and gives you an opportunity to get in control and feel steady, strong, and grounded.”

“Mountains are tall, steady, and strong. Stand tall with your feet on the ground, placed a bit apart. Imagine that your feet are the bottom part of the mountain and your head is the top. Maybe it is even covered in snow while the bottom is like a hot desert. Some mountains are very tall. Stand as tall as you can.”

“Notice how secure your feet are while your head reaches for the sun. Relax your arms by your side, with your palms facing forward. This is your Mountain Pose. Take a few deep breaths here as you stay steady, strong, tall, and calm, just like a mountain.”

“Now we are going to do another pose called the Big Oak Tree. This pose helps us cultivate inner strength and the ability to manage big emotions that make us feel out of control. Let’s start in our Mountain Pose. But for now, let’s imagine we have become a big

oak tree. We are an old and wise tree, so our roots dive deep into the earth. We are extremely big and tall as well, giving us strength and stability.”

“Take a big breath in and reach your arms towards the sun. Feel your strength in this pose. Your roots anchor you into the ground as your branches reach for the sky. Are there times when you feel like a big oak tree? Steady, safe, secure, strong, proud?”

“Imagine a huge gust of wind comes, as if a storm was brewing. As you inhale, lean back, and as you exhale, bow gently forward. Continue with this front and back movement using your breath to guide you. You can exhale through your mouth and make the sound of a gust of wind as well.” Repeat five times.

“Come to the center and gently lean side to side. Inhale as you reach to the sky, exhale as you lean to the side.” Repeat five times.

“Come to the center again and inhale, moving your arms out into a ‘T’ position. Rotate your body side to side, using your breath in each direction of the twist.” Repeat five times.

“Are there times that you feel like this big oak tree getting tossed around in all different directions? Perhaps it is when you are mad, or scared, or overwhelmed.”

“As you are moving with your breath in each direction, notice how your feet stay steady and secure on the ground. Notice how your branches can bend in all different directions without breaking off. You are just like this big oak tree. There are things that come and go and perhaps make us feel like we are being tossed by a big storm, or by big emotions or situations. We can always find our balance and calm strength by remembering that we can bend, but we won’t break. We can use our flexible body and mind to blow with the changing breeze of the storm, but it does not have to pull up our roots and knock us over.”

“These poses can bring us focus, calm, and strength. They remind us that while we can’t always control what happens to us, we can always control how we respond.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 9:

Goodbye Anger

Educator Preparation

- Preview and cue the following video, '[Anger Management Techniques](https://youtu.be/BsVq5R_F6RA)':
(https://youtu.be/BsVq5R_F6RA)
- Write the heading 'How to Let Go of Anger' on the board. This will start a list that will be generated during class of healthy, positive ways to cope with and release anger.

Activity

“Okay, so we know that we want to be in control and have personal power. But anger and other powerful emotions can take over and make it hard for us to be in control and have the power to make good choices.”

“It would be great if we could just never get angry or upset. But that’s not reality. Anger and other emotions are normal and natural feelings to have. And as we said before, these feelings often alert us when something isn’t right or fair. They sometimes move us to act, and inspire us in different ways, both positive and negative. Anger can even help protect us and keep us safe. But anger can be challenging to control when it feels very big and when it takes over. We have to maintain control and channel it in the right ways.”

“We’ve said that when someone hurts or wrongs us we can feel very angry. Forgiveness helps us let go of anger, resentment, and thoughts of revenge. When we forgive and say goodbye to anger and these powerful emotions, we leave the lizard brain, or that flight/fright/freeze mode that can get us into trouble. When we are in lizard brain mode, we are not in control, the anger is, and we end up making bad choices and acting in ways that can hurt ourselves and others.”

“So we have to have a toolkit for how to cope with and let go of anger and other strong emotions, so that we can be in control and have our personal power. When we handle anger and other strong emotions effectively, we can better choose how we respond and act and do so in positive, healthy ways.”

“Let’s watch a quick video on anger. This will give us some great anger management techniques or skills that we can use to empower us.”

Show video: [Anger Management Techniques](#)

“I hope that you learned some more about anger and some good ways to manage or let go of your anger. What were some ways they mentioned?”

Allow for responses. Start a list of ‘How to Let Anger Go.’

“There are many other things that you can do to let go of anger or cope with anger. What are some things you do or have seen others do that are positive, healthy ways to deal with anger?” Allow for responses and continue to add to the list.

“Let me read you this quote, by Ghandi, ‘You cannot shake hands with a clenched fist.’ What do you think that means? Do you agree? Why? How does this relate to forgiveness, compassion, and choosing love?”

“When someone hurts us, we feel angry, sad, frustrated, and other strong emotions as well. We can become like the closed 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 positively, if at all, with others. A closed fist signifies hatred, anger, negativity, and disconnection.”

“Right now I want you to trace your open hand on a piece of paper. All over your hand, I want you to write ways that you can effectively deal with anger and let go of it. Use some of the ideas we’ve generated on our list. How can you say goodbye to anger in a healthy way so you can have personal power and control to interact with others, and with life, with an open hand...with positivity, gratitude, compassion, and love?”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 10:

Sharing Gifts

Educator Preparation

- Have index cards or slips of paper for each student.
- Draw a picture of a gift box on a large piece of chart paper or poster board. Students will tape their 'gift' to the gift box as part of the activity. You could also choose to have a gift box where students drop their index card or slip of paper.

Activity

"Today we are going to do a self-esteem-building and team-building exercise. Everyone in this class is valuable and brings special gifts to the class. As we talk about forgiving ourselves, it's important that we take the time to highlight our strengths and talents, what makes us special."

"Alone you have great value, but together when you share your special qualities and talents, you are increasing your value as a whole. These 'gifts,' when shared, help the class be better together. Believing in yourself and having confidence in yourself allows you to share yourself and your special strengths with the class and the world around you. In doing so, you are positively impacting your teacher, your classmates, your school, and the larger world. I'm going to give each of you an index card/slip of paper. On it, I'd like you to write down one 'gift' or special quality, trait, or talent that you bring to the class to make it a better place or a stronger group."

Start with yourself and say the gift that you bring to the class as an example. After students have written down theirs, have each student bring their gifts to the front of the class where they will say them and tape them to the large gift box you've drawn on chart paper or poster board. In lieu of this, you can have students say their gift and then drop their slip of paper or index card into a gift box.

"Remember, there is no one else quite like you. You are special and add great value to the class, the school, the community, and the larger world. No one is perfect. We all have flaws and make mistakes, and that's okay. But don't let that define you. Have confidence in yourself. Remember all that is good about you...all the ways you shine. Don't be afraid to share your 'gifts,' your best self. And see how this creates a positive ripple that reaches farther than you can imagine."

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 11:

The Forgiveness Journey

Educator Prep

Write the following quote on the board:

To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.

— Lewis B. Smedes

Preview and cue [the following video](#) about a mother finding forgiveness in a particularly challenging situation:

(https://cbnuds-a.akamaihd.net/734546207001/734546207001_2484510784001_ASH19v2-HD720-copy.mp4)

Activity

“Let’s get started today by looking at a quote about forgiveness.” Read the quote that you have written on the board.

“What do you think of this quote? What does the author mean by ‘to set a prisoner free’? How are you a prisoner when you can’t forgive? How does forgiving set you free? How does forgiveness help you? How does it help others as well?” Allow time for reflection and discussion.

“We are going to watch a video clip about an individual and her spectacular and powerful journey to forgiveness. Perhaps it will give you some fresh perspective and insight to help you in your journey of forgiveness. I hope it will empower and inspire you.”

Show [the video](#).

“Wow, I don’t know about you, but I am blown away by this story. In small groups, I’d like you to react to and reflect on this video and this story of forgiveness. Ask and answer these questions: Write the following questions on the board: What do you think about this mother’s journey to forgiveness? What impacted you the most in her story? What stood out to you? How did forgiveness change her life? How did it free her? What did she gain? How did forgiveness positively impact the individual who had caused her so much pain and suffering? How did his life change as a result? How was her forgiveness an example of choosing love?”

After groups have had time to reflect and discuss, get together as a whole class and allow groups to share their feelings and reactions.

“To end today’s lesson, I’d like for you to think about some hurt that you have been holding onto - the biggest hurt. I’d like you to write it down on a scrap of paper. I will come around with this trash can, and if you feel compelled, I’d like you to rip it up and throw it away. This is symbolic of taking the first step to having the courage to start your forgiveness journey just as this mother did. No one can make this choice for you. But you have the courage to forgive and let go. By doing so you take control and get your personal power back. By choosing forgiveness, you are also choosing to love yourself and others, and this feels good, heals the wounds, and moves you to brighter days ahead.”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 12:

How The Light Gets In

Educator Preparation

- Write the following song on the board and/or display it:

"Anthem" by Leonard Cohen

The birds they sang at the break of day
Start again I heard them say
Don't dwell on what has passed away or what is yet to be
Ah the wars they will be fought again
The holy dove
She will be caught again
bought and sold and bought again the dove is never free.
Ring the bells that still can ring Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.

- Prepare/distribute the *Heart* digital/printable worksheet for all students.
- Have scissors and art supplies available for this activity.

Activity

"It is important to understand that just because you have chosen to forgive someone does not mean that you forget the injustice that they did to you. It would be nearly impossible to do that. What you are really trying to do is to get to a place where you can let go of the bad feelings you have and move positively forward with your life. You may choose to keep the offending person in your life or choose to stay separate from them...it is up to you."

"People often say that everything happens for a reason. But when you've been hurt or wronged by another, sometimes it can be hard to find or accept a reason, or to see any positive. Let's look at a song by Leonard Cohen called 'Anthem' that speaks to this." Have this song written on the board; display and/or read it to the class.

"What do you think he means by these words? How does this relate to forgiveness? How does this relate to choosing love?" Allow time to discuss and reflect on this song.

“I think that perhaps he was saying that not everything in life is great. Not everything works out the way we’d like or the way we planned or hoped. You aren’t perfect. Others aren’t perfect. Life isn’t perfect. We are flawed, and so life is flawed. There is a crack in everything.”

“And yet, most importantly, ‘That’s how the light gets in.’ A crack can be mended and put back together. You need to have the crack to let the light in. And the light overshines the dark. It is in being broken and in having our life sometimes be broken, that we can gain strength and purpose, and find opportunity for change, growth, and betterment. Our light shines within and it comes through our failings and the failings of others. Out of weakness comes strength, out of tribulations come triumph!”

“If we have courage and gratitude, practice forgiveness, and show compassion...follow the Choose Love Formula and Choose Love.....the light gets through the crack.”

“When we’ve been wronged or hurt and we forgive, we can move forward and get stronger. Maybe it means we change our friendships, maybe we realize that we need to make different choices and decisions moving forward, maybe it allows us to see something differently, or think or feel differently than we did before. Maybe our focus changes or our goals and what’s important to us change as a result. But there is a purpose, a light that comes from the brokenness, from the crack. We just have to look for it and find it!”

“Right now, you will each get a Heart sheet. I’d like you to think of all of the ways in which you’ve been broken...the ways you’ve been hurt or wronged by others as well as the ways that you’ve failed, made mistakes, or made poor choices. Write down the different things you’ve learned from the experiences. How have you grown? What have you gained from the experience? How have you gotten stronger? What light have you found through the cracks? Write these things down. Then I’d like you to decorate your heart and cut it into pieces so it becomes broken, like a puzzle. To end the class, you will be repairing the cracks, mending the brokenness, putting the pieces back together as you put the heart back together.”

Allow time for students to make their hearts and then put their heart puzzles together. They can even be allowed time to swap puzzles with a classmate and put a different puzzle together. You may wish to debrief as a whole class, inviting students to share what they’ve learned or what stood out to them. What are some things they wrote on their heart?

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 13 :

Forgiveness Poems

Educator Preparation

Students will be creating forgiveness poems using the format below. Write this on the board:

Forgiveness is (sights, smells, sounds, textures, tastes, descriptions)

Forgiveness is (emotions).

Forgiveness is (actions).

Forgiveness is (desires).

You may wish to create your own forgiveness poem in this format to give a model for students.

Activity

“Find a comfortable position to sit or stand during our Mindful Minute. Close your eyes and focus your attention for one minute on a person who you think is a forgiveness role model.”

“We’ve learned a lot in our exploration of forgiveness. Now that you’ve formed an idea of what forgiveness is, we’re going to list the qualities of some people who demonstrate forgiveness. Who are people that you think show forgiveness and in what ways? What other traits do they demonstrate?”

Guide students to acknowledge a diverse range of people such as civil rights leaders, men and women in the armed forces, presidents, the Dalai Lama, tragedy survivors, teachers, family members, peers, and themselves.

“What qualities or behaviors do all these people have in common? How did practicing forgiveness benefit these people and the people around them?”

“On any given day, you could find yourself in situations where you need to make a decision about forgiveness. You may have hurt or been hurt, wronged or been wronged, and you will be at a crossroads where you have to make the choice between forgiving and

letting go or holding onto the hurt and wrongdoing. When that happens, remember the qualities and values of those that are forgiveness role models.”

“You have the ability to forgive as they have. You have these special qualities in you. Trust yourself to be courageous and practice forgiveness.”

“We’re going to write forgiveness poems. Complete the statements written on the board in your journals.”

Allow time for students to create their poems. Invite students to share their forgiveness poems. You may wish to have students write these up nicely and display them in the class or in the school.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 14 :

Forgiveness Web

Educator Preparation

- Have a ball of string/yarn available for this activity.
- Arrange students in a large circle. This can also be done in two small groups, each with their own ball of string.

Activity

“We have learned a lot about forgiveness...what it is, why it’s important, how it benefits you, what it involves, 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, we are going to review what we’ve learned and reflect on what impacted us the most by creating a Forgiveness Web. Listen carefully while I give you instructions for this web.”

1. One student will hold the ball of string/yarn and start by saying something they have learned about forgiveness or something that impacted them in this unit. Think about what stood out to you, the power of forgiveness, a skill you’ve learned, something that you will do moving forward. The person with the string will share this nugget.
2. 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.
3. Students will then 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.

“This is our Forgiveness Web.” Discuss how the Forgiveness Web illustrates how we are all connected in many ways, one of which is that we all can forgive and be forgiven. Remind students that forgiveness benefits both the giver and the receiver. Forgiveness helps build and strengthen connections with others. When we practice forgiveness, we can improve our relationship with ourselves and others. When students let go of the string/yarn, the

web falls apart, which symbolizes how we are more and have more when we forgive and when we connect with one another.

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making

EXTENSION LESSON 15 :

A Letter To Scarlett

Activity

“Let’s start today by taking a Mindful Minute to focus our attention and calm ourselves. Find a comfortable position to sit. Close your eyes. Make a fist with your hand and squeeze it as tight as you can. Over the course of our Mindful Minute, focus on releasing the tension in your fist and relaxing your hand. As you do so, imagine letting go of tension not only in your hand but in your whole body. Like letting go of a rope that is wound tightly, picture the tension and stress being released from your body and mind.”

“This Mindful Minute we just took reminds us of the power of forgiveness and what it is all about. Forgiveness releases tension. It is a way to let go of all of the feelings and thoughts associated with past hurts that bring us stress and make us feel like a tightly wound rope. It feels so much better to let go, unwind, and forgive, and move forward in peace.”

“In our last class we talked about Scarlett’s journey of forgiveness. I don’t know about you, but I find it to be super inspiring. Today I’d like you to think about Scarlett’s story and the Choose Love Program that she and her son Jesse inspired.”

“I’d like for you to pour your mind and heart out in a special letter. In your journal, I’d like you to write a letter to Scarlett Lewis. I’d like you to let her know how you feel about her story, her journey, and your reactions to the Choose Love Program you have been a part of. Reflect on what you’ve learned so far and how these things will impact your life now and in the future. What has stood out to you? Express your thoughts and feelings as if she were right here in front of you. What would you like to tell her if she were here today?”

Allow students time for this written reflection. After, you may invite any students to share their letters. It would be great for you to write your own letter and read it to students. Allow for discussion and further reflection. You may choose to mail these to Scarlett. You can ask students if they feel comfortable doing so. If so, you may have students rewrite these onto white paper or cardstock and add drawings.

These can be sent to: Scarlett at Jesse Lewis Choose Love Movement PO Box 605
Newtown, Connecticut 06470

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship skills

Responsible decision-making



Grade 8| [COMPASSION IN ACTION](#) |Overview

GRADE 8: 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: Compassionate Connections

Lesson 3: Flexing Our Compassion Muscles

Lesson 4: Self Compassion

Lesson 5: Becoming a Peacemaker

Lesson 6: Choose Love Commitment

EXTENSION LESSONS

Ext Lesson 1: Choose Love Constitution

Ext Lesson 2: Compassion Quotes

Ext Lesson 3: The Ripple Effect

Ext Lesson 4: Walk in my Shoes

Ext Lesson 5: Pay Attention

Ext Lesson 6: Color Your World

Ext Lesson 7: Alphabet of the Heart

Ext Lesson 8: Yay You!

Ext Lesson 9: Fear or Love

Ext Lesson 10: Powerful Posters

Ext Lesson 11: The Starfish Story

Ext Lesson 12: Choose Love Portrait

Ext Lesson 13: Compassion Creations



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 in Action.➤ Generate three questions to find common ground➤ Connect finding common ground with an individual to compassion in action➤ Practice finding common ground with classmates➤ Reflect on common ground and new understandings of a classmate	<p><u>CSED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Moral Character➤ Performance Character➤ Intellectual Character <p><u>SEL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Self Awareness➤ Self Management➤ Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

Write 'Courage + Gratitude + Forgiveness + Compassion in Action = Choosing Love' on the board

Write the definition of compassion on the board: *Compassion is the understanding of a problem or the suffering of another and acting to solve the problem or alleviate the suffering.*

Preview and cue video, 'Take a Seat, Make a Friend' by Soul Pancake:

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

Lesson

“Find a comfortable position to sit. Close your eyes and focus your attention on your heart for one minute.

“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? If someone asked you, what would your definition of compassion in action be?” Allow for responses and discussion.

“Compassion in action is the understanding of a problem or suffering of another and acting to solve the problem or alleviate the suffering. We add ‘in action’, because we want to go beyond just understanding how someone feels and actually take action to make them feel better.

“When we have compassion, we are aware of the pain or suffering of others, and have a desire to alleviate it. During this Compassion in Action Unit, we are going to learn more about what compassion is, learn skills to become more compassionate, and identify ways to demonstrate compassion in action in our lives. Compassion in action has a ripple effect. When we take compassionate action, we increase love and we all benefit.

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

“We are going to take some time today 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 SoulPancake 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 exists!

“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 three 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.

COVID: Based on social distancing requirements, you may need to have students write their questions on a large piece of paper and walk around staying 6 feet away from classmates to ask each other the questions they generated. Try your best to facilitate this discussion by allowing students time to get up and move around as much as possible. An option may be to do this activity outside.

Allow time at the end of the class for reflection. Some questions to consider using to conclude the lesson:

- Did anyone learn something new about a classmate? What was it?
- Which question generated the most discussion? Why do you think that is?
- What common ground did you find between yourself and a fellow classmate? Did this new information change any of your ideas or perceptions of them?

“For our Call to Actions this unit, we will focus on a celebrity who has shown compassion in some way/shape/form and ask you to connect to them in some way.”

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: Compassionate Connections

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Connect empathy to compassion.➤ Differentiate between empathy and sympathy.➤ Cite the steps to practicing empathy➤ Practice paying attention to others to show compassion.➤ Identify ways to pay better attention to others.➤ Practice compassionate listening through paraphrasing.➤ Apply elements of active listening in small groups and in peer/family conversations	<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 students into groups of 3
- Write “How to Practice Empathy” steps and bulleted comments on the board prior to the lesson

1. Observe Others

- Step outside yourself.
- Shift your focus onto other people.
- Be curious about others.
- Watch others without labeling and judging them.

2. Be An Active Listener

- Slow down.
- Listen carefully and without interruption.
- Don't rush to reply.
- Ask questions to understand better.
- Try to see and accept their perspective and opinion, even if yours is different.

3. Open Up

- Learn about others' feelings and experiences.
- Be yourself.
- Share your feelings and experiences.
- Discover similarities, common ground, and connections

Lesson

“Everyone, take a minute to find a sitting or standing pose that helps you feel compassionate, open, connected, and happy. Typically, you might spread your arms out wide, open your hands, or place your hands over your heart. You should show body language that is open and large, not closed and withdrawn. Just as the Courage Pose makes you feel brave, strong, and confident, the Compassion Pose should make you feel happy, peaceful, loving, connected, and compassionate.”

“Try out a few different positions before deciding which one feels best to you. Make sure you can hold your pose for at least one minute without getting hurt or tired. It is also helpful to say a positive compassion affirmation to yourself as you stand in this pose. Something like, ‘I am happy and full of compassion.’, ‘I can connect with others in positive ways.’, for example.”

“Let’s all practice our poses together. First we’ll try holding it for 15 seconds. Ready, go!”

“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 others is when we have empathy and can empathize with them. But what is empathy? Any ideas?” Allow for responses.

“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 mile 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.

“A Sympathetic response would be: ‘That’s really a bummer.’, ‘Everything will be ok.’, ‘I feel sorry for you.’, ‘Well at least....’, ‘Look on the bright side...’, ‘Don’t worry’. A sympathetic response might mean you change the subject, maybe make a joke to distract, you may dismiss the problem or try to quickly fix it.

“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.’, ‘I don’t even know what to say right now.’, ‘My heart hurts for you.’. An Empathetic response might mean you just sit and listen without saying anything, you don’t judge the situation or dismiss it, you connect with someone by thanking them for sharing, or you may even cry because you feel what they are feeling.

“Who can give me an example of a time when you think you showed empathy toward another person? What did that look like and sound like? How did they know that you really connected and cared?” Invite some students to share. It would be helpful for you to share some examples as well.

“Compassion starts with having empathy for another....really trying to see their

perspective and connect with them in more than just a superficial way.”

“How can we practice empathy? For some, it seems innate (like they do it naturally), but for others, it needs to be thought of and practiced. There are a few simple ways that we can practice empathy. They are: Observing Others, Active Listening, and Opening Up.”

(Refer to items listed on the board prior to lesson.)

“Ultimately, practicing compassion is all about paying attention to others. Let’s brainstorm a list of ways for us to pay better attention to others.” As a class, brainstorm a list of ways to pay better attention to others and list them on the board. Have students write these in their journals.

“When we pay attention to others, we start to connect with others and can better understand them. We become aware of how they feel and see their strengths, challenges, pain, suffering, and sadness. This allows us to begin to have empathy and then compassion for others.”

“One way in which we can pay attention to others and show empathy is to practice active listening.

“We are going to practice active listening today. For our purposes, we will call it compassionate listening.

“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. After you’ve listened carefully, you can ask if there’s something you can do to help.

“Being a good listener is a very important skill that can help us in many ways. How can being a good listener benefit you? How can it benefit others? How does being a good listener help you to have empathy? In what ways is being a good listener a simple way to show great compassion?” Allow for responses and reflection.

“Look at the image I have posted. This shows the Chinese characters that make up the word ‘to listen’. What is essential to be a good listener? What is the recipe for active, compassionate listening?” Allow for responses.

“To be a compassionate listener, we give our undivided attention by listening with our

ears, eyes, and heart. This means we have an open mind and listen carefully and without judgement. We look someone in the eyes and listen without interrupting. We try to understand what someone is feeling and experiencing and feel with them.

“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

Chris Paul, a guard for the Houston Rockets basketball team, has many professional accomplishments. But off the court Chris Paul is known as one of the most compassionate and caring players in the entire NBA. He works with several different organizations that focus on providing resources for children.

When in high school Chris Paul famously played the '61 point game' to commemorate the life of his murdered grandfather. He scored a total of 61 points- one point for each year his grandfather lived.

Just as Chris Paul scored one point for each year his grandfather lived, score your own points. For each year you've been alive, write down one way that you can show compassion at school or in your community. How can you show compassion in action and help others in need? Write down an idea for action for each year...so if you are 13 that's 13 actions. Write these down in a safe place.



Lesson 3: Flexing Our Compassion Muscles

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Define a compassion muscle➤ Reflect on the power of positive and negative words➤ Connect a color changing water demonstration to Compassion and the power of words➤ Brainstorm lists of the ways to make people feel happy and good.➤ Apply the Pay it Forward challenge to daily life	<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 Pay It Forward Project video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BAX3rIWooDM>
- Have a large glass bowl filled three quarters full with water.
- Have blue food coloring and one liter of bleach.
- Have some measuring spoons.

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.”

“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 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.”

“Think of a time that someone’s words made all the difference to you. What did they say and why was it so impactful?” Students may write this in their journal. Invite students to share.

“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.”

“Our words carry so much power. This includes the words we say to ourselves and those we say to others. This includes both spoken and written words. They have the power to bring somebody down or lift someone up. They have the power to hurt or to heal, to depress or inspire. There is a quote from Harry Potter by Albus Dumbledore that I love, ‘Words are our most inexhaustible source of magic capable of both inflicting injury and remedying it’. What do you think that means?” Allow for responses.

“Often as teenagers we wish for more independence, freedom and power.....but we fail to realize that we already have all three. We have the freedom and power to independently choose how we will respond to what happens to us. Now we just have to decide what we will choose and how we will act. Will we be inspired and spread anger and hate, or happiness and love? You have the power to choose.”

Prepare the bowl of water, food coloring and bleach for demonstration.

“Let’s do a little experiment to see this power in action. You can see that I have a bowl full of water. Let’s imagine that this bowl is the feelings of others. I’d like some volunteers to tell me about a time when someone was unkind, disrespectful, hurtful or mean to you. What did that sound like or look like?”

Allow a few students to share these experiences. Each time they do, add drops of blue food coloring to the water.

“What does the water look like? What do you think that represents?”

“Have you ever heard the expression that someone is ‘feeling blue’? What does that mean? What difficult feelings are associated with the color blue? As you can see our water turned blue every time something mean, hurtful or unkind happened. This shows us that when we treat people unkindly, hurtfully, and disrespectfully, we cause others to ‘feel blue’...to feel hurt, sad, depressed, anxious, and more.”

“Now I’d like some volunteers to share some times when you were treated with kindness, respect, compassion, and love. What did that sound like and look like?”

Each time that someone says something, add about two to three tablespoons of bleach to the water.

“What does the water look like now? What do you think that represents?”

“The water turned yellow. What feelings do you associate with the color yellow?”

Allow for responses. Students should share that yellow is usually associated with feeling cheerful, happy, bright, positive, and good.

“When people treat us with kindness, acceptance, respect, compassion, and love we feel bright, sunny, happy, loved, and accepted.

“The choice is yours. How will you treat others? How will you make others feel? How will you color your world and the world of others?”

“Let’s color the world yellow. How can you make others feel happy and good? With a partner (or in small groups or as a whole class) create a list of the ways you can make others feel understood, accepted, included, connected, loved and happy?” Allow a few

minutes for partners to generate lists. Then allow partners to share their lists with the whole class. Create a running list of all of the ideas shared.

“Has anyone heard of the ‘Pay It Forward’ Challenge?” Allow for student responses.

“Let’s hear a little about the pay it forward challenge so we can flex our compassion muscle.”

Show link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BAX3rIW0oDM>

“What are your takeaways from this video? How are YOU going to Pay it Forward today?”

“Your call to action today and EVERY DAY is to pay it forward 1 to 3 times per day. Before we conclude today, think about a few different ways that you will complete this challenge?”

Call To Action

Sean Penn is a name recognized worldwide for both his excellence as a film actor, but also for his humanitarian aid and relief organization founded to help the people of Haiti.

According to CBSNEWS.com instead of living the life of luxury high in the Hollywood hills, Sean Penn spends most of his time sharing a three bedroom home in Haiti with 20 other people. Sean Penn works on relief efforts for the people living on the small Caribbean island to save lives and repair damage done by the hurricane and government.

Let’s say you woke up tomorrow a famous celebrity worth millions. If you had the resources to start your own charity to help others what would it be? Who would it primarily help and what would it be called? Write down your ideas for this dream charity.



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/printable worksheet for each student.

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.

“I am going to give you an example of a Victory Checklist. I want you to check it off, fill it out, and highlight all of your victories. 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

The name Oprah Winfrey is synonymous with success. Oprah's early life was full of struggles and it has been said that her only friends growing up were farm animals. She was raised in poverty and became pregnant at a very young age, however, her life drastically changed when her son died shortly after she gave birth. Once she moved in with her father, education became a priority and Oprah began her personal journey of bettering herself. She later became the first ever African American woman to host a TV show.

Oprah has a website, a magazine and her own TV network. In all of these mediums she empowers, encourages and inspires, giving people the tools to be their best selves.

Oprah.com suggests trying Compassion Meditation where a phrase is silently repeated that can “express the intention to move from judgement to caring, from isolation to connection, from indifference or dislike to understanding (Oprah, 2016).”

First get comfortable at your desk and relax your body. Close your eyes and think about someone you love. Breathe deeply for a minute and silently offer words of compassion to this individual. For example, 'May my mother always be safe, loved and free from pain'.



Lesson 5: Becoming a Peacemaker

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Define peacemaker.➤ Connect examples of youth who are peacemakers and making a difference in the community.➤ Distinguish between injustice and inconvenience and identify examples of each.➤ Identify personal core values➤ Identify personal injustices that are important➤ Brainstorm positives and negatives in the schools and the community.➤ Highlight a personal injustice and identify possible solutions➤ Create a 'Solutions Tree' to discover the possible solutions and positive outcomes of an injustice.	<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

- Preview the following links below which introduce some real world youth who are peacemakers and have initiated peace projects to make a difference. These links include written information and videos of these

peacemakers. It is suggested that you read about and/or show videos on several of these peacemakers. The more examples of real world youth role models that students are given, the better. Each video is about 2 minutes in length. These links are from Peace First, a non-profit organization dedicated to helping young people around the world to become powerful peacemakers.

- Peacemaker videos: <https://www.peacefirst.org/stories>
- For more information on topics in this lesson, you can go to the following link:
 - <https://www.peacefirst.org/resource/choose-1-personal-development>
 - There are reproducibles available that you may use to supplement this lesson.

Lesson

“I want to start today by asking you a simple question... If peace were a color, what color would it be and why?” Invite some students to answer.

“We’re going to explore what it means to be a peacemaker as a way to show compassion in action. Let’s start by learning about some students just like you from all over the country who are peacemakers. These young people have highlighted issues that are important to them and problems they want to be a part of solving. They are powerful role models practicing compassion in action and making a positive difference in their communities. I hope that you will be inspired by their causes, projects, actions, and compassion.”

At this time you can read about or show the videos of several of the peacemakers of your choosing from the links provided. It’s very important for students to see their peers; students that are relatable, as powerful, impactful role models. These students offer inspiring real world examples of youth making a difference and practicing compassion in action.

“Turn to a partner and discuss the role models you just learned about. Which were the most inspiring to you and why? Which causes that were discussed are most important to

you? How do these students motivate and encourage you? Could you see yourself starting a peacemaking project like they did? Take a few minutes to reflect with a partner.”

“So what is a peacemaker? Any ideas? Think about the peacemakers we just learned about. What did you notice about them? Let’s draw a bubble map to highlight the characteristics of a peacemaker. I will draw one on the board for us to fill in together.”

Draw a small center circle and put the word ‘Peacemaker’ in the center of the circle. Create a bubble map from this center circle. Invite students to share the characteristics of a peacemaker and add these to the surrounding circles/bubbles.

“We’ve got a really good idea now of what it means to be a peacemaker. A peacemaker is one who identifies an injustice and seeks to address it through compassion and courage. Peacemaking includes how people welcome and include others in their schools and/or community, how you deal positively and fairly with conflict between friends, and how you react to frustrations in a healthy, safe way.”

“However, being a peacemaker is more than putting peace first in your own life. Being a peacemaker means putting these practices to work on a broader scale as these peacemakers we saw have done. This really sounds like what we’ve been talking about in this unit on compassion in action. Remember, our definition of compassion in action is the understanding of a problem or suffering of another and acting to solve the problem or alleviate the suffering. This is key to being a peacemaker.”

“So what is an injustice? Any ideas?”

“An injustice is consistent harm to a particular person or group or when someone is targeted based on their identity. An example would be a student being bullied. This differs from an inconvenience which is a short term irritant or annoyance to all groups, that is often random. An example of this would be not being able to use your cell phone in class. I am going to read out a few examples and I’d like you to let me know if you think it’s an example of an injustice or an inconvenience.”

Read the following examples and invite students to indicate if it’s an injustice or

inconvenience.

- Students who don't speak English well are constantly made fun of.
- You broke your phone or device.
- Students with disabilities are bullied at school.
- There is a lot of traffic in town one day.
- There is a lack of clean water for people in a particular community.
- Your team lost a soccer game.
- A girl at school is criticized for identifying as a male.
- Youth in the community don't have enough to eat at home.
- Your class doesn't get to go on a field trip to Washington DC.
- A classmate is followed through a store by a worker based on the color of their skin.

"As you can see there is a big difference between an injustice and an inconvenience. In the past injustices have been the catalyst for great social movements. Can you think of an example of this?" Allow for responses.

"A peacemaker is one who identifies an injustice and seeks to address it with compassion and courage. As you saw in the video, students had different injustices that they wanted to address. These are the issues that they are most passionate about. Usually this goes back to what your core values are....what you see as important, your fundamental beliefs and guiding principles."

Examples are acceptance, education, tolerance, fairness, personal growth, success. Think about your core values. What's important to you? What are you passionate about? What injustices do you see that frustrate you?"

"Now let's think about peace. What does peace feel like to you? What gives you hope or inspires you? What is your passion? What is one thing you want to see in the world?"

"Now I'd like us to think about our school and community. Let's make a list of the positives and negatives that we notice. What are the positives or strengths? What makes our school and community great? What are you most proud of?" Allow for responses and

list on the board under the heading, 'Positives'.

“Now let’s think about the negatives. What are the issues? What in your school or community makes you upset or frustrated? What do you notice that is troubling to you? What in your school or community makes it difficult every day?” Allow for responses and list on the board under the heading, 'Negatives'.

“As we look at these negatives, which ones are injustices and which are inconveniences? Let’s go through each one and determine.” Go through each one and write down if it is an injustice or an inconvenience.

“Pick one of the injustices we’ve listed or perhaps there is one you have in mind that we haven’t mentioned. Complete the following sentence and answer the listed questions about this injustice that you’ve chosen”

Write the following statements/questions on the board:

- I care about _____ because _____.
- Why is this injustice important to address?
- Who does this injustice affect?
- How does it affect this person or group of people?
- Who or what causes this?
- Why does this person or group behave in this way?

“Now that you’ve identified your injustice. Let’s think about solutions. How can you address this issue with courage and compassion? I am going to give you a piece of paper to draw something called a ‘Solutions Tree’. You can make a ‘Problem Tree’ in much the same fashion to better understand the problem, the causes of it, and the consequences of the problem/issue. But today we are going to focus on solutions. I’d like you to take a few minutes to complete the ‘Solutions Tree’. You are going to write down the alternative, or what the future would look like without this injustice. Then you will fill out the branches with all of the positive consequences or results of this change. What’s the ripple effect? Finally, you will look at the roots of the tree and think of how you could make this change happen? Brainstorm ideas to get at some possible solutions.”

Allow students to complete these trees. Then, have them do a pair and share with a partner. Let them get their partner's perspective and feedback.

"We have just gotten started with becoming a peacemaker, but there is much work to be done. I hope that you are inspired! So what's next? Now that you know the injustice you want to solve, and how you could solve it, it's time to step up and put your compassion into action. You can get help from Peace First -- they're an organization that helps students start projects to improve their communities all around the world. We've learned about peacemaking using resources from Peace First. If you go to their website, www.peacefirst.org, you can download more tools to help you plan your project, connect with mentors who can help you figure out what to do next, and apply for a mini-grant of up to \$250 so that you can bring your idea to life! So don't wait -- if you want to make the world a better place, Peace First is ready to help you."

For teachers: Peace First is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping young people around the world to become powerful peacemakers. They have resources you can use to help your students develop and implement their own peacemaking projects. They offer a curriculum full of project planning tools, a facilitator guidebook and on-call support for teachers, a supportive and moderated online community where students can post their projects and receive feedback, and mini-grants of up to \$250 available for all projects. You can incorporate Peace First's tools into your classroom or service-learning project -- or encourage your students to create peacemaking projects on their own, using the self-guided tools! If you'd like to learn more, please visit them at www.peacefirst.org or email programs@peacefirst.org with questions.

The Jesse Lewis Choose Love Movement is excited to collaborate with the Peace First Organization.. We encourage you to explore Peace First more with your students at www.peacefirst.org.

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.



Lesson 6: Choose Love Commitment

Student Outcomes	CSED/ SEL Model Standards
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Generate choose love commitment statements➤ Synthesize information learned throughout the course of the unit.➤ Create a culminating project depicting the major lessons gleaned from the Choose Love for Schools Program.	<p><u>CSED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Moral Character➤ Performance Character➤ Intellectual Character <p><u>SEL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Self Awareness➤ Self Management➤ Responsible Decision Making

Educator Preparation

- Draft your own commitment statement to choosing love to share with students.
- Copy the following on the board to help inspire the students' commitment statements:
 - I commit to choosing love because...
 - I believe... I value... I want... I think... I feel... I can... I dream... I hope... I know...
- Print out the Choose Love Enrichment Program Certificates and have one completed for each student.

Lesson

“Let’s take a final Mindful Minute to complete the Choose Love Program. Find a comfortable position to sit or stand. Close your eyes and focus your attention on choosing love for one minute.”

“In our final lesson, I’d like you all to use the following prompts to reflect on our Choose Love journey and your personal growth.”

I commit to choosing love because...

I believe...

I value...

I want...

I think...

I feel...

I can...

I dream...

I hope...

I know...

“This year we’ve spent a great deal of time talking about how to grow emotionally and become a better person through our learning around the Choose Love Formula. Think back to our lessons on courage, gratitude, forgiveness and most recently, compassion. What are your takeaways? How would you explain your learning to others who haven’t experienced this program? How has your life changed in small or big ways because of what you know now?”

“Think about a way that you can bottle up all of the knowledge you’ve been given to pass along to someone else. Scarlett is looking for students to use their own voice to explain the benefits of the Choose Love for Schools Program and how it has impacted your life. You can use any type of mode you want. We will be sending these to Scarlett for her to share with others around the world. The sky’s the limit. As Jesse said, ‘Have a lot of fun!’”

Challenge your students to find some outlet (lean towards digital platform) noting what their takeaways are from the year long program to be turned into Scarlett Lewis. Some

examples could be a short video, a mural or collage, a dream board, a letter or even a song (a melody is provided on the Choose Love for Schools website under resources). These culminating activities can be presented to the class as well as with the Choose Love For Schools Program!

Call To Action

Find a piece of paper in your journals and draw a bunch of small boxes like it's a comic strip. Fill each little box and fill it well.

Let these boxes represent your life...how can you make it amazing? What does an amazing life look like to you? How can you show compassion and love to yourself and others? How can you learn and grow? What goals do you have? What have you and will you achieve? What life will you create and shape? Write it all down with words, sentences, pictures, comics, and the colors that show this amazing life that is yours.



Grade 8 | 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:

Compassion Quotes

Educator Prep

Prepare/distribute the 'Quotes on Compassion' digital/printable worksheet.

Activity

"We've just begun our last unit in the Choose Love Program which is the Compassion in Action Unit. Today I want to share what some famous people had to say about compassion.

"I'm going to pass around a sheet that has various quotes on compassion. Let's get some volunteers to read each one aloud. As each quote is read, I want you to stomp your feet twice if you agree with it."

Distribute the Quotes on Compassion sheet to all. Call on volunteers to read each one aloud.

"For the next few minutes, I want you to reflect on these quotes in your journals. What stood out to you? What is something that you learned about compassion from them? Which quote is your favorite? Write it in your journal and reflect on the quote and why it is your favorite. React and respond to it."

Time permitting, you can have students break into partners or small groups and share some of their favorite quotes and reflections. You can even allow students to use their phones/tablets/computers to find another quote on compassion to share with the larger group.

This can be an in class activity or can be an out of class assignment or extra credit opportunity where they find a different quote and give a written reaction or response to it.

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

EXTENSION LESSON 3:

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 4:

Walk In My Shoes

Educator Preparation

- Preview and cue video: https://youtu.be/D38S9o_6qnc
- Have a lot of different pictures of shoes, at least one picture for each student. Students should have the opportunity to pick a shoe for the writing activity. Try to have a lot of variety such as sneakers, boots, sandals, moccasins, slippers, high heels, work shoes, etc. Make sure to have both plain and fancy, old and new, men's, women's and children's shoes...as many varieties as possible.

Activity

“In order to really make a difference in someone’s life we need more than just feeling sympathy for a person when they are feeling hurt, angry or sad. We need to go beyond sympathy. This is where empathy comes in.

“Empathy is really listening and letting go of judgement to connect with others. It’s stepping outside ourselves and our world to see someone else’s perspective and better understand them. When you have empathy you have a deeper emotional connection with another and you communicate to them, ‘You are not alone’. And empathy is a very important part, it can be the start, of having compassion for someone.

“Let’s watch a short video clip that relates to what we’ve been talking about.” Show the video: https://youtu.be/D38S9o_6qnc

“What do you think of this video? How was the man feeling throughout the video? What happened when he put on the glasses? How did his perspective change? Did he start to have empathy? In what way(s)? How did seeing others’ perspectives change the way he felt? How will that change the way he acts moving forward? What compassionate act did he do? How will that change his life and the lives of others?”

Students should respond in their journals. Then allow for discussion and reflection.

“Compassion in action is what allows us to act upon our empathy for others. Compassion motivates us to help fix what is causing the suffering, or at the very least lessen the pain. When we understand the pain or suffering of another and do something to alleviate the

suffering or solve the problem, we are practicing compassion in action. When we practice compassion in action, we connect with others in a very powerful way. We find that in helping others, we help ourselves as well.

“Today we are going to practice stepping outside ourselves and being in someone else’s shoes in an interesting way. I have a lot of different pictures of shoes. I am going to let you pick one of these shoe pictures out of a hat. When you get your shoe picture, I want you to think about the person who may be wearing this shoe. Who are they? What is their life like? What is their story? What are they thinking and feeling? In your journal, write from the point of view of the person who wears this shoe. Practice walking in someone else’s footsteps.

“There is an Indian Proverb that says, ‘Never judge a man until you have walked a mile/two moons in his moccasins’. Let’s walk a mile/two moons in some different shoes.”

Invite students to share their shoe perspective writing. Time permitting or as an extension activity, you can give students different scenarios and have them put themselves in the shoes of someone in this situation. They can highlight how that person feels and what they would be thinking. They can identify how that person may act.

Finally, students can highlight some ways they could show empathy and compassion to the person in this situation. Some sample scenarios include:

- Student getting bullied
- Student not picked for team
- Student who discovers that nasty things are being written about them on social media
- Student who finds that there are rumors going around about them
- Student who does poorly in school
- Student who is peer pressured
- Student who gets in trouble a lot at school
- Student who has a lot of family issues
- Student who is a loner and doesn’t seem to have any friends.

Students may also choose to come up with their own situation.

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

EXTENSION LESSON 5:

Pay Attention

Educator Prep

Preview/cue the following video 'Where Does Compassion Really Come From?':

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4a66aFaIME>

Activity

“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 your sight and pay attention.

“Where does compassion come from? We know it comes from having an awareness of the pain and suffering of others. To do so you need to be able to have empathy for others, or the ability to take another person’s perspective and feel with another. It’s trying to put yourself in their shoes to feel what they feel.

“But how do we do that? We are going to watch a video that attempts to explain where compassion really comes from, where it starts. Sometimes having and showing compassion seems complicated or difficult, but this video shows us how it starts with a simple action.” Show the video: <https://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 pay better attention to others and list them on the board. Have students write these in their journals.

“Today we discussed a very easy but essential way to start having compassion for others which is simply by really paying attention to them. It feels really good when someone pays attention to us and when we feel heard.

“When we pay attention to others we start to connect with others and can better understand them. We become aware of how they feel and see their pain, suffering, and sadness. This allows us to begin to have empathy and then compassion for others.

“To end today’s lesson, I’d like you to take a minute to pay attention to your classroom and classmates. Put on those magnifying glasses and pay attention. What do you notice? What stands out to you? Write your observations in your journal.

“Today, see if you can start really noticing and paying attention to others and the world around you. Step outside yourself, your perspective, your world. See if this little action makes a difference in how you see, understand, interact and connect with others.”

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

EXTENSION LESSON 6:

Color Your World

Educator Prep

- Have a large glass bowl filled three quarters full with water.
- Have blue food coloring and one liter of bleach.
- Have some measuring spoons.

Activity

“We’ve been talking a lot about the power of words. It is said that we must choose our words well because they have the power to inspire or destroy. But what about our actions? Can’t the same be true about our actions, the choices we make and our responses?”

“Often as teenagers we wish for more independence, freedom and power.....but we fail to realize that we already have all three. We have the freedom and power to independently choose how we will respond to what happens to us. Now we just have to decide what we will choose and how we will act.

“Will we inspired by and spread anger and hate, or happiness and love? You have the power to choose.”

Reference the experiment you prepared prior to lesson. **“Let’s do a little experiment to see this power in action. You can see that I have a bowl full of water. Let’s imagine that this bowl is the feelings of others. I’d like some volunteers to tell me about a time when someone was unkind, disrespectful, hurtful or mean to you. What did that sound like or look like?”**

Allow a few students to share these experiences. Each time they do, add drops of blue food coloring to the water.

“What does the water look like? What do you think that represents? Have you ever heard the expression that someone is ‘feeling blue’? What does that mean? What difficult feelings are associated with the color blue?”

“As you can see our water turned blue every time something mean, hurtful or unkind happened. This shows us that when we treat people unkindly, hurtfully, and disrespectfully, we cause others to ‘feel blue’...to feel hurt, sad, pain, depressed, anxious, and more.

“Now I’d like some volunteers to share some times when you were treated with kindness, respect, compassion, and love. What did that sound like and look like?” Each time that someone says something, add about two to three tablespoons of bleach to the water.

“What does the water look like now? What do you think that represents? The water turned yellow. What feelings do you associate with the color yellow?” Allow for responses.

Students should share that yellow is usually associated with feeling cheerful, happy, bright, positive, and good.

“When people treat us with kindness, acceptance, respect, compassion, and love we feel bright, sunny, happy, loved, and accepted.

“The choice is yours. How will you treat others? How will you make others feel? How will you color your world and the world of others?”

“Let’s color the world yellow. How can you make others feel happy and good? With a partner create a list of the ways you can make others feel understood, accepted, included, connected, loved and happy?”

Allow a few minutes for partners to generate lists. Then allow partners to share their lists with the whole class. Create a running list of all of the ideas shared.

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

EXTENSION LESSON 7:

Alphabet of the Heart

Educator Preparation

- Preview/cue the following videos:
 - [Stress and Compassion](https://youtu.be/SDrq_oz_IMM) (https://youtu.be/SDrq_oz_IMM)
 - [Alphabet of the Heart](https://youtu.be/wL1LafjGMKQ) (<https://youtu.be/wL1LafjGMKQ>)
- Prepare/distribute the “Alphabet of the Heart” digital/printable worksheet.

Activity

“Let’s begin by taking a Mindful Minute. Find a comfortable position to sit. Close your eyes and focus your attention for one minute on a time when you felt loved.

“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 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.

“But often as we go through life and face these difficulties, when we fall short, or have setbacks, we become very critical and judgemental towards ourselves. Often we find it easier to show compassion and love to others, but find it harder to do so with ourselves. When others are going through struggles, we can be quick to lend a hand, show kindness and concern. But if we are in the same situation, we often don’t extend ourselves the same care and concern.

“It’s important for us to show acceptance, patience, kindness, and compassion to ourselves. This helps us to be able to have a positive attitude and choose a growth mindset that allows us to learn from our mistakes and challenges, move past them and become a better, smarter and stronger person.

“As we have discussed, 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.

“Now we are going to watch a video called, ‘Stress and Compassion’, with Dr. James Doty who is the Founder and Director of Compassion and Altruism Research and Education at Stanford University. In this video he talks about the powerful effect compassion has on us and on others.” Show video to students: https://youtu.be/SDrq_oz_IMM

“Would anyone care to share their feelings after watching this video? Did anything surprise you? Did anything sound familiar?

“In this video, Dr. Doty spoke of his daily practice to increase compassion for self and others called ‘10 Letters of the Alphabet’. This is also sometimes referred to as ‘Alphabet of the Heart’. In the ‘Alphabet of the Heart’, the letters from C to L each represent something to keep in mind or practice to be compassionate. Let’s see if we can remember what each of these letters stood for.”

Reference the “Alphabet of the Heart” digital/printable worksheet. Take time to highlight what each of these words/practices means through discussion and reflection.

The letters are:

C - Compassion

D - Dignity

E - Equanimity

F - Forgiveness

G - Gratitude

H - Humility

I - Integrity

J - Justice

K - Kindness

L - Love

“Get with a partner and take a few minutes to discuss each of these letters. In your journals, write what these words mean to you and how they may help you. How can you display/practice these traits in your life?”

“Remember as we think about having compassion for others, we must remember to extend that same compassion to ourselves. This allows us to view the world through a positive lens and be happy and healthy. It helps us to be resilient in the face of adversity and to connect with others in meaningful, impactful ways.”

If desired, and time permitting, you may show the following video, ‘Alphabet of the Heart’:
<https://youtu.be/wL1LafjGMKQ>

This video speaks more about this practice and what each of the letters mean. In this video, they refer to a bracelet that has 11 beads, one for each letter, along with a gold bead to represent the ‘Golden Rule’. A great additional extension activity would be to show this video and then have students create their own ‘Alphabet of the Heart’ Bracelets as a reminder.

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

EXTENSION LESSON 8:

Yay You!

Educator Prep

Make a copy of the 'Inspiring Quotes' digital/printable worksheet for each student.
Prepare/distribute "Acrostic Poem" digital/printable worksheet.

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 us 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 to applaud yourself for that."

**"The famous tennis player, Maria Sharapova, said this,
*'I always write down a bad practice or match in my journal. I want to spot and learn from my mistakes and then let go. It sounds ironic, but when you put a moment down on paper, it becomes a piece of history-one that you can move away from.
The exciting thing is that if you can have a bad moment you can have an incredible one too.'*"**

Reflect as a class on this quote. **"It takes courage, gratitude, forgiveness and compassion to think in this way...to be able to listen to the inner critic and turn the criticism into inspiration, to look at mistakes and failures as good things- as opportunities to grow, learn and get better. It's so powerful and important to let go of bad moments and know that there are incredible moments to come, to accept that you are not perfect, but love that you are perfectly you and capable of great things.**

“In other units, we’ve talked about the importance of keeping our thoughts positive. We’ve even created some affirmations and positive self-talk to direct our thoughts and feelings.

“Remember, affirmations are empowering thoughts or statements that help you overcome a challenge, an obstacle or a doubt. They create a visual or belief in what you want to achieve....they set an intention that can channel your thoughts, feelings and actions in positive, inspiring ways. These words inspire us to be our best and are a way to show compassion to ourselves.

Today, I need a few volunteers to help me. I have a few quotes that other people have written that I think are pretty motivating and inspiring. I’d like a few volunteers to read them aloud. And then we’ll take a minute to reflect on each.”

Give each student a copy of the ‘Inspiring Quotes’ sheet. Invite volunteers to read each of them. Allow students to reflect briefly on their meaning and message.

“I’d like you to pick the ones that mean the most to you. Which of these quotes do you find motivating and inspiring? Which of these do you think might be helpful to you and guide your thoughts, feelings and choices in positive, healthy ways? Circle, highlight or star the ones that stand out to you in this way. Let these be affirmations to help move you forward and help you to respond favorably, no matter what the circumstance. If you feel compelled, on the back of this sheet, write down any other affirmations to show yourself compassion and to keep you motivated and inspired.

“Finally to end today’s lesson, let’s continue to practice self-compassion and affirm ourselves. Using the worksheet as a template, I’d like you to take the letters of your name and turn them into an Acrostic Name Poem.

“For each letter, write a word or phrase of inspiration and encouragement. Instead of being negative and critical, highlight your strengths, your successes, and what makes you special and valuable.

“What are some of your best qualities, your talents, the ways in which you shine? Use these for the words to your Acrostic Name Poem.

“I will give you a few minutes to write these and decorate them. After, if we have time, we’ll share some of these.”

You may wish to write and share a sample acrostic poem with your name as a model for students. **“Remember the world is full of negative that we can dwell on, but that doesn’t serve you or others well. Put on those grateful, compassion glasses to highlight the positive. Be your own cheerleader and see the great in yourself. There’s nothing that can stop you but yourself! You are imperfectly perfect and your job is just to be the best you...learning, growing, and getting a little bit better every day!”**

SEL Skills Taught Self-awareness, Self-management.

EXTENSION LESSON 9:

Fear or Love?

Educator Prep

- Write the following quote on the board:

There are only two emotions: love and fear. All positive emotions come from love, all negative emotions from fear. From love flows happiness, contentment, peace, and joy. From fear comes anger, hate, anxiety and guilt. It's true that there are only two primary emotions, love and fear. But it's more accurate to say that there is only love or fear, for we cannot feel these two emotions together, at exactly the same time. They're opposites. If we're in fear, we are not in a place of love. When we're in a place of love, we cannot be in a place of fear. - Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

- Preview and cue the following video of Jim Carrey called, 'Love not Fear':
https://youtu.be/_TIXuCG1gug

Activity

“Today we are going to talk a little more about choosing love. Look at the quote from Elizabeth Kubler-Ross that I’ve written on the board while I read it to you.” Read quote aloud.

“What does this mean to you? What do you think she is trying to say? Do you agree? How do these words relate to what we’ve learned about courage, gratitude, forgiveness, compassion in action and choosing love? How do these words inspire you and your actions?” Allow for reflection and discussion.

“The world we live in is a beautiful, wonderful place. And yet, it is also a crazy world that is plagued by problems, tragedies, violence, sadness and upheaval. We’ve talked a lot about how we can’t always choose what happens to us, but we can always choose how we respond...we can and must respond in love if we are to be the best we can be, have the best life we can, enrich the lives of others and make this world a better place.”

“When we reflect on the choices we make and the responses we have, it really is true that every decision, every response comes from one of two places, either from fear or from love. It all goes back to how we perceive things.

“Remember, what you perceive and believe to be so becomes your thoughts that then shape your feelings. These feelings then influence, shape and determine your actions. And all of this shapes and creates your reality, your world.

“We want to choose love over fear whenever and wherever we can. It is in choosing love that we create positive beliefs, thoughts, feelings, words and actions that create and shape a beautiful, loving world.

“Jim Carrey, the famous comedian and actor, gave a speech about love or fear. Let’s watch this powerful video.” Show the following video clip: https://youtu.be/_TIXuCG1gug

“I’d like you to take a minute to do a quick 2 minute freewrite in your journals, reflecting on this video and it’s message. When I say start, put your pencil to the paper and just write. Don’t worry about spelling, punctuation or grammar....just react, reflect, and respond to what you heard without worrying about any of that.

“To end today’s lesson, I want you to write down a few fears that you have that may hold you back from choosing love. We are going to throw those away. Let’s let love instead of fear steer our ship.” Allow time for students to write down a few fears and then walk around and allow them to rip them up and throw them away.

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

EXTENSION LESSON 10 :

Powerful Posters

Educator Prep

- You may wish to pre-assign partners for this activity.
- Students will need poster board or large white paper to create posters that will be displayed. They will also need simple art supplies. Alternatively, this can be assigned as a web-based project using Google Slides or Canva.com.
- Prepare/distribute the 'Power of Words' Quotes digital/printable sheet for each student.

Activity

“We’ve been talking about the power of words. Today we are going to let the rest of the school know about their power.

“First, I am going to give each of you a sheet of quotes about the power of words. I’d like some volunteers to read each quote aloud. We’ll take a few moments to share some reactions and responses to the quotes we hear.” Give each student a quote sheet and invite students to read them aloud. Allow for brief discussion and reflection.

Then you will have students break into partners. Students will be given a poster board or large piece of paper and art supplies. These will be used for students to create quote posters to be displayed in the class, on a bulletin board or around school in a designated area. You can even take pictures of the posters to post on social media.

“Now you’ll be working with a partner to create a poster with one of these quotes on it. Pick the quotes that you like the most. I will go around and help you select your final quote for your poster so we don’t all have the same one. You will write the quote and any other words and phrases to inspire and uplift others. You can also add pictures or designs to your poster. We’ll be hanging these in the school to teach and motivate others.... we’re using our words to inspire and help others!”

At the end of class, invite students to stand up and share their posters.

“As we leave today let’s be reminded of an Arab Proverb that says, ‘The mouth should have three gatekeepers- Is it True? Is it Kind? Is it Necessary?’. Write this in your journals in big letters as a reminder. If you take the time to pause and ask yourself these questions before you use your words, it will make all the difference. Ask yourself what kind of echoes you wish your words to create.....let’s echo compassion, kindness, peace and love.”

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

EXTENSION LESSON 11 :

THE STARFISH STORY

Educator Prep

- Have a small strip of paper for each student and a box or jar to put them in. Students will be picking a slip out of this receptacle.
- Prepare/distribute 'The Starfish Story' digital/printable 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. With compassion, you not only feel with others and take their perspective, but you then have the desire to help and to make their situation better.

"We've discussed practicing empathy through paying attention to others and through the way we communicate and interact with others. There are so very many ways to show empathy and then to act on that by showing compassion in action. When we show empathy and compassion in action we create strong and meaningful connections. It takes courage to step outside yourself to show empathy and compassion to others. But in doing so, we can change our life and the lives of others. We can make a difference."

Give each student a copy of 'The Starfish Story' or you can display it and read it to the class.

"I am going to read a story called, 'The Starfish Story'. You may have heard it before because it's a simple, beautiful story with a powerful message. Listen as I read it to you."
Read 'The Starfish Story' aloud to the class.

“What do you think of ‘The Starfish Story’? Do you agree? How can showing compassion in action make a difference?” Allow time for discussion and reflection.

“Think about your life as a teenager and situations you face at school, with peers, and at home. How could you show more compassion in your day to day life? What does compassion sound like and look like? What courageous connections can you make to make a difference in the lives of others?”

Break students into groups. Allow them to discuss and make lists in their journals. Then, invite groups to share their ideas with the larger class.

“Now that we have a lot of ways to show compassion, let’s put them into action. To end this lesson, we are going to choose some random acts of kindness to carry out. Random acts of kindness may be small and simple actions but they have a very powerful impact. These little acts can create a ripple effect that spread kindness and compassion far and wide.

“I am going to hand out a strip of paper and I’d like you to write down one random act of kindness that can be accomplished before the school day is over. You can use the lists you just created to give you ideas or come up with some other acts.

“Examples could include things like: smile, say hello to five people you don’t usually talk to, thank a teacher for giving a good lesson, include someone who is left out, ask someone how they are, etc. The idea is to come up with simple, easy compassionate actions that can help you connect with others and make a difference.

“I am going to gather these and mix them all up. You will select one before you leave class and write it down in your journal. Your task is to complete the action that is on your paper by the end of the day. You must at least do this act once, but I encourage you to do it more than once, as much as you can.

“What effect do you think your act of kindness will have on others? What benefit will you get from this? How will it make you feel to complete this task? What difference might it make for someone else? What ripple effect might be started? What if you set small compassion goals each day? How could that change your life and the lives of others?”

Gather the ideas in a receptacle, mix them up, and then go around and let students pick one slip out of the container. Students must then complete their action by the end of the

day and reflect on it in their journal. Check back in with students to see if they carried out their act and what they noticed when they did so.

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

EXTENSION LESSON 12 :

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

EXTENSION LESSON 13:

Compassion Creations

Educator Prep

Provide art materials including poster boards or large white paper, crayons/markers/colored pencils, magazines and scissors or any other materials to be used for artwork. Alternatively, this could be assigned as a web-based design project using Google Slides or Canva.com.

Activity

“Let’s get started by taking a Mindful Minute. Find a comfortable position to sit or stand. Close your eyes and focus your attention on the colors of the rainbow. Then focus on the one color that stands out to you and is your favorite.

“As we near the close of the Compassion in Action Unit, I hope you feel compelled and inspired to start spreading compassion and love near and far, in small and big ways, in this moment and in the future. There is a quote by Prince, ‘Compassion is an action word with no boundaries’. What does this mean to you? Do you agree? Why are there no boundaries to compassion?” Allow for class discussion and reflection. Or you may choose to have students discuss in partners or small groups.

“Today we are going to think more about what compassion is and what compassionate change may look like. Imagination, visualizations, and creativity are great ways to exercise your compassion muscles. In the 2010/2011 school year, 10,436 students from grade K-12th in art classes in the Appleton Area School District illustrated their ideas of what compassion is. They had to draw on a tile what compassion meant to them. This was called the Appleton Compassion Project.

“These students created a special, one of a kind mosaic. made up of thousands of meanings of the word compassion. This project built the compassion muscles of all of the individual students who participated, but it also connected people and spread compassion through art.

“Today, I’d like you to create your own artistic interpretation of what compassion is. Express yourself and what compassion means to you through artwork- a drawing, comic,

collage or other expression. What does compassion look like to you? Show how compassion in action has no boundaries.”

Invite students to share and explain what they’ve created. Ask them to think about how they felt when they were creating their compassion art/ expression...did it make them feel more compassionate and loving?

Artwork can be hung in the room or you can try to find ways to share their work in a display at school or via social media.

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