

Social and Emotional Learning in the Time of Distance Learning: An Online Resource for Educators Concerned About Children's Coping Skills

Lesson # 5

Recognizing the Consequences of Our Patterns

(Narration appears in italics throughout this lesson.)

Always begin your class meeting with a Check-In.

A check in is a very important part of each session/lesson/meeting. "Checking in" with each other involves naming and acknowledging feelings, and is a great way to connect members of the group with each other, creating a sense of community. Checking In allows students to pause at the beginning of a session and, by naming their feelings, free up their thinking power for engagement in the session. Research has suggested that the check-in activity builds empathy among group members and strengthens group connections. Students are permitted to pass. If time is a problem, hand signals can be used by students to participate in the check in (thumb up, thumb horizontal, or thumb down).

Today's Check-In: Ask students to think about a time when they "fed the Evil wolf" since the last lesson. Now, ask the students to think about a time when they "fed the good wolf" since that last lesson. Ask students to share how they felt after each time on a scale of 1 to 10? Discuss these patterns of behavior and accompanying feelings, linking them together. Explain to the students that actions produce feelings, but that feelings also motivate us to act in a certain pattern, sometimes without our being aware of the pattern.

On your screen, share this quote from a 7th grade student who is practicing awareness of patterns:

"If you get into an argument, step out of it before it escalates. Otherwise your emotions will build up to a point where they can't be ignored, and then you can't really handle them as well. You might say something that you don't mean to say. You can't think clearly."

Lesson # 5: Thinking things through

Mini-Lesson: Recognizing the Consequences of Our Patterns

In our Social and Emotional Learning lessons, we have learned that we may automatically react in different situations because we have learned to react that way. These patterns become hard-wired into our brains.

Activity: Ask students to cross their arms the way they normally do. Now ask them to cross them the opposite way. What do they notice? It is hard to do because the brain hard-wires arm crossing, and when you try to change your body the brain resists the change by making it uncomfortable for you.

Video Camera Exercise: Think of a situation when you were challenged or upset. Pretend you have a video camera and are taking a video of the situation. Ask the students to take out their journals and write down what happened as if they were watching it through the video camera lens.

Ask the students: Did you want that outcome to happen? What did you really want? What were your thoughts at the time? Feelings? Actions?

Ask students to create a pattern sentence from this situation and write it in their journals.

When _____, I _____.

Explain to students that taking a moment to reflect on what happened, our choices, our patterns, is key to understanding and choosing our behavior. Explain that some scientists are calling this process Mindfulness.

Watch this Mindfulness as a Superpower video with the students. Before you start the video, ask the students if they have been practicing the Body, Mind, Heart check.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6T02g5hnT4>

Debrief: As students to take out their journals and answer the following questions.

- 1. How can mindfulness (noticing our emotions and patterns) help us?***
- 2. What feelings did you notice when you were doing the Video Camera exercise?***

3. What did you learn from the Video Camera exercise? How can you use this “tool” in your life?