

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

Lesson # 11

The Power of Friendship and Respect to Stop Bullying

(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: A Verse about Changing Friendships

"Sometimes in the Waves of Change,

We find our True Direction."

Ask students to write in their journals what this verse means to them. After they have finished writing, ask several students to share what they wrote. Explain that it is also important, as we grow, to be open to new people and the new things that they introduce us to. Our brains grow and change as a result of our new experiences. Explain to students that, although friendships may change as we grow, the good things that made us friends in the first place stay within us. We learn from each relationship that we have, even when friendships end or change. We are always growing and changing over the whole course of our lives, if we open ourselves to change.

Mini-Lesson: Identifying Bullying in Your School

Ask the students to think of a time when they have been made to feel bad or excluded. How did they react? Ask the students to think of a time when they made someone else feel

excluded or bad. Tell the students that this is one type of bullying. Explain that there are many types of bullying, some of which use physical acts (pushing, shoving, tripping), and some which hurt others with words or exclusion. One difficult form of bullying happens over social media and is called CyberBullying.

There are many myths about bullying that educators, parents, students, researchers and scientists tell us are not true, but here are two of the most often stated myths.

Myth # 1: Bullying is a part of life.

Tell students that Bullying is not a part of life; nor is it something everyone has to go through. When bullying starts, recognize it immediately, keep a log of events, do your research and get your parents and teachers involved. Be persistent. People who are bullied are often helpless to stop the pattern of bullying, which is usually repeated over and over, directed at the same unfortunate person. This pattern is traumatic for the person being bullied.

You have a right not to be bullied, harassed, assaulted or abused.

Myth # 2: Bullying toughens a person for life's adversities.

Tell students that Bullying does not toughen a person up; rather it causes anxiety, depression, and other health problems that often last into adulthood. It is in the same league as harassment, discrimination, racism, violence, assault, stalking, physical abuse, sexual abuse and many other illegal activities that cause harm to others.

What about the person doing the bullying? Explain to the students that bullying others teaches the person doing the bullying unhealthy patterns of behavior that are often carried over into adulthood and mar adult relationships. People who bully others may bully their spouses, children, or co-workers when they are older because they haven't learned how to have a good relationship.

Tell students that it is very important for our brains to learn to respect other people who are different and to improve the connection between the Corpus Collosum and the parts of the brain that build empathy. If we don't learn these behaviors, we may not develop good connections with others, which are necessary for good health.

Show Video about Embracing People's Differences

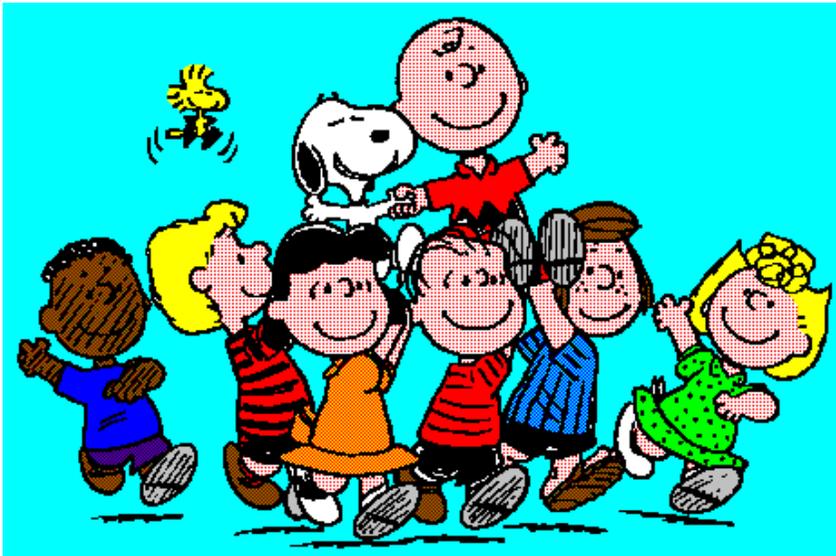
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQuM5e0QGLg>

Explain to students that our brains revert to patterns that we have learned and that our culture does not always teach us to respect differences, but encourages us to make fun of

people who are different or “weird.” Explain to students that bullying behavior occurs as the result of patterns we have learned so well that we do not notice our words or actions. As we have learned in our EQ lessons, we need to practice awareness of hurtful patterns of behavior and work together to change them. Here is a story from my school psychologist experience with playground bullying behavior. (You can tell this as if you were me, or you can share a similar story of your own.)

What Can Be Done to Stop Bullying? This is my favorite quote from Charles Shultz, whose insights helped us to understand childhood and its struggles.

“It’s not an easy life to be a child, especially when you’re out there on your own, unprotected by supervising adults.”



Research tells us that each incidence of bullying lasts an average of 12 seconds, and is deliberately framed so that adults do not see it.

“Once, with a second-grade class whose teachers reported bullying behaviors on the playground, I held a class meeting with all of the second graders in the school. I asked the students to tell me what was happening to them on the playground. (Note: I asked them not to tell me “Who,” but “What” was happening.) The children shared incidents of name calling, excluding some children, deliberate and hurtful physical acts (tripping, pushing, or shoving), refusal to cooperate in games, cheating on the rules - the list went on and on. I also asked the second-grade students to tell me how each incident made them feel. I wrote it all down on the board in the front of the room for everyone to see.

When they were finished telling me about the playground incidents, I told the children that it made me very sad to hear how they were being treated on the playground. Then I said, "Please tell me who is coming into the playground, uninvited, and doing this to you?" The children looked at me, astonished for a moment, thought for a minute, and then said, "Well, we are doing it." Awareness!! The first step to changing behavior. I said to the children, "Well, if you are doing it, can you work together to change it?" Problem solving began in earnest and I checked in with the second graders regularly to see how their solutions were working. Things improved greatly during second-grade recess."

Activity: *Blow up about 20 balloons and have a marker ready to write on each balloon. Ask the students to describe a bullying activity they would like to get rid of in their class or school. Write one or two words on each balloon, describing the bullying activities. Have students write in their journals ways to change or end those activities. Have students share solutions, making a plan to put the solution into place. When a plan is formed, symbolically pop the balloon to destroy the bullying.*

In the next lesson, we will continue to discuss bullying and a program to end bullying in schools.