

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

(Narration appears in italics throughout this lesson.)

Lesson # 1

The Importance of Connection

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 cognitive processing 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: After introducing themselves, ask the students to express how they are feeling at this moment on a scale of 1-10. An answer of 1 signifies "pretty low" and an answer of 10 indicates "feeling great." Tell students that they may offer a brief explanation of their rating if they wish to. (What often happens is that another student will follow up and ask about the student's stated rating, either at the time of the check in or after the session.)

Today's topic focuses on the importance of connection to others. Research strongly shows that human brains are wired to connect with each other and learning occurs in an atmosphere that feels safe and open.

Play Video: The Human Connection Experiment.



The Human
Connection Experiment

Debrief: Ask students to write their answers to the following questions in their journal. Ask the questions one at a time, giving the students time to write their answers. Another technique could be to have a discussion and record the discussion for later viewing.

1. How did you feel when the video began?

2. Did your feelings change during the video?
3. What elements of the video touched you?
4. How did you feel at the end of the video?
5. What is the point of the video and the importance of human connection?

Lesson on Recognizing Emotions:

Play video “Just Breathe”



Just Breathe by Julie
Bayer Salzman _ Josh

Ask the students: Do you have methods like the ones the children talked about in the video?

Mini-Lecture: The Body, Mind, and Heart Check (BMH)

Explain to the students that they can begin to understand what they are thinking (Cognitive), feeling (Emotional), and doing (Physical Actions) by using a simple technique called the BMH.

Take a few seconds to “scan” your body, mind, and heart. Inhale and exhale slowly 2-3 times to begin.

First, listen to your body. Slowly send your attention from your toes to your head. Notice any physical sensations, tension, aches and pains, etc. (Body)

Now, focus on your mind. Notice how you are thinking. Are you spinning fast, going slow, making things “awful”, ignoring problems? Don’t change your thoughts or judge them, just notice them. This helps your thoughts become clearer and slows them down.

Now, focus on your “heart.” What are you feeling? Notice that there are always multiple feelings. Can you identify 2 or more feelings? This helps you name and understand your emotions.

Guide the students through the BMH. Then say: now you can practice this technique of understanding yourself. Give them 5 minutes to do it on their own.

Debrief: Ask students to write their answers to the following questions in their journal.

1. Were you able to notice sensations in your body?
2. What were your thoughts?
3. What feelings did you identify?
4. Where did your attention seem to go first? (Tension in the neck; tight tummy)

Tell the students that our attention is quickly drawn to our BMH Touchstone, which is where we feel unease or discomfort first. Your BMH Touchstone is your clue to tune in to your feelings and to your thoughts.

