

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

Lesson # 4

The Super Power of Emotions

(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 pause for a moment and practice the Body-Mind-Heart exercise. Give the students 2 or 3 minutes to complete this. Use your voice to guide them through the steps, if you think that is needed. Emphasize to students the importance of doing this every day and talk for a minute about how doing this helps to change our brains into a more positive thinking mode.

Activity: Ask students to share how they felt at the beginning of the class and to share how their feelings had changed by the time the exercise concluded. Lead a short discussion on how our brains change each time students practice this exercise. Ask students how much practice they think it will take to make a more permanent change in their brain’s “tool box” so they can use the BMH exercise as a calming tool.

Lesson # 4: The Super Power of Emotions

Have students watch the following video about mindfulness and How the Brain Works. Tell the students that awareness strengthens brain connections. Ask students to think about the value of an exercise like the BMH exercise on their brains.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNCB1MZDgQA>

Mini-Lesson: The messages of our emotions. Tell students that our emotions are chemical messengers in our very large and complex nervous system. Their job is to guide us in our thinking so that we understand what we need or want to do. When we ignore our emotions, they can build up or increase in intensity as the day goes on, giving us a headache and perhaps causing us to speak or act in a way that we did not intend.

Scientists have defined eight basic emotions that human beings have. Emotions are neither good nor bad in themselves. It is how we use their message that gives us positive or not-so-positive consequences. Taking a pause and considering an emotion we are feeling can help to make the message of that emotion clearer to us. We can then focus on our own and on others' feelings in a situation. Feelings are responses to significant situations and our feelings often motivate our actions.

You might also mention the movie "Inside Out" and share this image on your screen. Ask students what emotions they can identify in this picture.



Ask the children to create a chart like the one below in their journals for their future reference. Students should draw a symbol that will help them remember the meaning of each message. Have students share their symbols with others when they are finished.

Emotion	Message	Symbol/Drawing
1. Fear	Something must change	
2. Anger	Fight against problems	
3. Joy	Reminds us what is important	
4. Sadness	Reach out to and connect with those we love	
5. Acceptance	Open our hearts to others and listen to their points of view - Empathy	
6. Disgust	Reject what is unhealthy	

7. Anticipation	Look forward and plan to enjoy what is coming	
8. Surprise	Focus our attention on new situations and begin to understand their message	

Story: Conclude with this story: I am going to tell you a very powerful story that is actually a riddle. Tell the students: When I have finished, I would like you to write your answer to this question in your journals:.

What does the grandfather mean when he says, "The one that you feed?"

Share the story on your screen or you can also watch the Video that tells this story:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzKryaN44ss>

ONE EVENING, AN ELDERLY
CHEROKEE BRAVE TOLD HIS
GRANDSON ABOUT A BATTLE THAT
GOES ON INSIDE PEOPLE.

HE SAID "MY SON, THE BATTLE IS
BETWEEN TWO 'WOLVES' INSIDE US ALL.
ONE IS EVIL. IT IS ANGER,
ENVY, JEALOUSY, SORROW,
REGRET, GREED, ARROGANCE,
SELF-PITY, GUILT, RESENTMENT,
INFERIORITY, LIES, FALSE PRIDE,
SUPERIORITY, AND EGO.

THE OTHER IS GOOD.
IT IS JOY, PEACE LOVE, HOPE SERENITY,
HUMILITY, KINDNESS, BENEVOLENCE,
EMPATHY, GENEROSITY,
TRUTH, COMPASSION AND FAITH."

THE GRANDSON THOUGHT ABOUT
IT FOR A MINUTE AND THEN ASKED
HIS GRANDFATHER:

"WHICH WOLF WINS?..."

THE OLD CHEROKEE SIMPLY REPLIED,
"THE ONE THAT YOU FEED"