

MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1

# Creating a Compassionate Classroom

## Overview

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The purpose of SEE Learning is to help students explore and investigate for themselves how they can best take care of themselves and each other, specifically with regard to their emotional and social health, so that they can flourish and make sound decisions that bring benefit to themselves and others. Therefore, all of SEE Learning can be seen as rooted in compassion: compassion for oneself (self-compassion) and compassion for others. Rather than didactically instructing students to “be kind” or “be compassionate,” however, the approach of SEE Learning is to facilitate personal insights among students and to provide them with a system of skills and tools. As students come to understand the value of these skills and tools, they will begin to employ them for themselves. At that point, they become their own and each others’ teachers. The teacher’s role in all of this is not to insist upon right answers or correct perspectives (nor to have all the “right” answers themselves!), but to facilitate and nurture the learning process, making room for multiple perspectives and diverse experiences.

Chapter 1, “Creating a Compassionate Classroom,” introduces the foundational concepts of kindness and compassion. “Kindness” is the term employed for younger students, whereas “compassion” is employed for older students. Although there may be subtle differences between these terms, for the purpose of SEE Learning, the important thing is to introduce these concepts and explore them with your students so that they eventually develop their own rich understanding of the concepts and what they look like in practice. All the subsequent chapters of SEE Learning then build upon this foundation by exploring self-compassion in the personal domain with regard to the body, the mind, and emotions (chapters 2 to 4); compassion for others (chapters 5 and 6); and compassion in a systemic context (chapter 7). In some ways, therefore, this first chapter introduces the “what” of SEE Learning and the remaining chapters fill out the “how.”

Learning Experience 1, “Exploring Compassion,” introduces the concepts of compassion and kindness, explores what they mean, and investigates their benefits. It also explores the relationship between compassion and happiness by using two activities: a step in/step out activity and a drawing of a moment of kindness. It is important for students to explore the connection between compassion and happiness. If students begin to recognize that our universal wish to be treated with compassion by others (rather than with cruelty) is rooted in our wish for well-being and happiness, then they can recognize that this tends to hold true for others also. Therefore if we want to be treated with kindness, it only makes sense for us to treat others with kindness also. This is the principle of reciprocity.

Learning Experience 2, “Exploring Happiness,” asks the question of whether we all want happiness and well-being, and whether this is a basic orientation in our life and something that we share in

common with all human beings and even animals. Don't be concerned if students differ in their opinions on whether we all prefer compassion or want happiness. It is enough at this point to explore these questions with them and for them to hear a diversity of perspectives and opinions, and to start to relate such questions to their actual lived experience. Eventually if students do decide that they do want happiness, they will be able to relate all of SEE Learning to that basic motivation and they will be able to explore the question of what brings happiness on ever-deeper levels. Recognizing that others also share our wish for happiness in turn facilitates compassion.

Learning Experience 3, "Class Agreements," provides an opportunity for students to create a list of class agreements that they will strive to abide by in order to create a safe and kind classroom for all. The creation of agreements by students helps them explore compassion in a direct way that shows the clear implications of our need for compassion within the context of a shared space with others.

In Learning Experience 4, "Defining Compassion," students then develop their own definition of compassion, which they can later add to and amend as their understanding develops in sophistication.

Learning Experience 5, "Recognizing Kindness and Compassion," involves a further exploration of kindness and compassion, this time through practicing the skill of noticing acts of kindness and compassion. This overlaps with the idea of gratitude, which will be explored in greater detail later in the curriculum. Although we are surrounded by acts of kindness every day, we often do not recognize these acts of kindness or we take them for granted. By looking deeper at everyday activities and seeing the various ways kindness is involved, students can recognize that "appreciating kindness" is a skill that can be developed over time. Eventually they will be able to see more acts of kindness around them and they will get better at recognizing and appreciating their own acts of kindness.

Practicing the skill of recognizing kindness in its various forms can lead to a deeper appreciation for how essential kindness is to our everyday life, our happiness, and even our very survival. In this learning experience, students will also recognize how objects around them are made possible through the kind acts of others, setting the stage for an exploration of interdependence and gratitude later in the curriculum.

It often happens that some students find it difficult to recognize kindness in themselves and others. Acts that appear to us as kind, such as someone holding the door open for another person (or even the act of teaching!), may not appear as kind acts to some of your students. Be patient and allow

your students to explore these concepts gradually. Hearing other students express what they see as kind can be helpful, as can having some students share kind acts that they noticed that were done by fellow students. It may take time, but it is likely that over time you will see perspectives slowly shift towards a greater ability to recognize kindness in its many forms.

The chapter concludes with Learning Experience 6, “Practicing Kindness and Compassion.” This learning experience returns to the classroom agreements, but now with a greater understanding by your students about what compassion is and with an intention to make the classroom agreements more concrete in the minds of your students. First the students engage in an insight activity whereby they translate the class agreements into practical examples that can be acted out. Then they act out those examples in front of each other and reflect on what they experienced. This process of embodied understanding should continue as the school year goes on and will make it easier to refer to the class agreements concretely throughout the year.

### **The Components of a SEE Learning Experience**

You will notice that each learning experience begins with a check-in, and that these check-ins change and develop over time. The check-ins provide a way of transitioning in to the SEE Learning experience and signalling a shift in the day, but they are also a way to strengthen skills through repeated practice. You are welcome and encouraged to use the check-ins at other times, even when you do not have enough time to do a full learning experience.

Some learning experiences involve discussions or presentations that give students a basic knowledge of a term or idea. This is for the purpose of received knowledge. The learning experiences also include insight activities, which are designed to be short activities that can move received knowledge into the realm of critical insights, personal “a-ha” moments when a student realizes something for themselves. Whenever possible, received knowledge is incorporated into the insight activities (rather than as a separate presentation) so that students can learn by doing.

It is not necessary (and indeed may be counterproductive) to try to drive home insights prematurely. The sample scripts provided do not need to be followed verbatim, and there are no “right” and “wrong” answers to the question prompts for students. It is perfectly fine to trust the process and allow students to explore these topics gradually and freely on their own, making room for disagreements and diverse views. With a relaxed approach, it is very likely that your class will develop a collective, shared understanding that progresses over the course of the school year and that makes room for and welcomes a diversity of experience and thought.

In addition, learning experiences include reflective practices. These are for moving from critical insight into embodied understanding; they are for deepening the experience. In some cases there is not a sharp distinction between insight activities and reflective practices, because a reflective practice can lead to insights, and an insight activity can be repeated and deepened to encourage further reflection and internalization. Both insight and activities are sometimes marked with an asterisk. This symbol indicates that you are encouraged to do that particular activity more than once if you feel it would be helpful.

Finally, each lesson ends with a debrief, which is an opportunity for students to reflect on the learning experience as a whole and share their thoughts, feelings, and questions.

### **Time and Pacing**

Each learning experience is designed to be a minimum of 30 minutes. It is recommended that you take longer than this if time allows and if your students are capable of it, spending more time on the activities and reflective practices especially. If you have less than 30 minutes, you can choose to only do one of the activities or a part of the activity, and finish the learning experience in the following session. However, remember that check-ins and insight activities are important to include regardless of time.

### **Setting Up a Peace Corner**

You may wish to set up a peace corner, where students can go when they are upset or need some time to themselves. This will also serve as a good place to post artifacts created by your students, including charts and artwork that they create, and posters or other materials that are supportive of SEE Learning. Some classrooms have pillows, a stuffed animal, special pictures, a poster of the resiliency zone (explained in Chapter 2), snow globes and hourglasses, music, story books and other such resources. Explain to your class that the peace corner is a place where they can show kindness and compassion to themselves and practice some of the things they are learning in SEE Learning. Over time, just going to the peace corner may prove helpful for your students when they need to settle themselves or return to a place of well-being in their bodies, as they come to associate the peace corner with safety and well-being.

### **Student Personal Practice**

Eventually your students will be learning personal practices that they can use. SEE Learning recognizes that each student will connect with a different set of practices. SEE Learning also scales up into practices gradually, recognizing that if not approached skilfully, some practices may actually make students feel worse rather than better. Chapter 1 sets the stage for personal

practice by establishing a safe and caring environment. Chapter 2 then introduces practices that calm and regulate the nervous system. Chapter 3 then introduces practices involving the cultivation of attention (and what are commonly called “mindfulness” practices). Chapter 4 then introduces practices involving emotions and how to navigate them. It is advised that you follow this sequence as best as you are able, as that way your students will be well prepared for each additional type of practice and will be able to return to the simpler forms of practice in case they become upset or dysregulated.

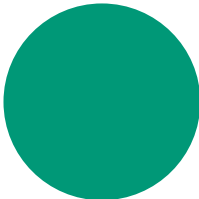
### **Teacher Personal Practice**

It is highly recommended that you begin some of the practices in Chapters 2 and 3 before you start teaching them to your students, if you do not already have familiarity with them. Even a slight bit of personal practice (such as a few minutes each day) will make your teaching more effective when you reach those sections. Starting early will allow you to get in as much practice as you are able before working on the practices with your students.

### **Further Reading and Resources**

If you have not yet completed reading the SEE Learning Framework, contained within the SEE Learning Companion, you are encouraged to read that up to and through the Personal Domain.

Also recommended is Daniel Goleman and Peter Senge’s short book *The Triple Focus*, and Linda Lantieri and Daniel Goleman’s book *Building Emotional Intelligence: Practices to Cultivate Inner Resilience in Children*.

CHAPTER 1		Creating a Compassionate Classroom	
LEARNING EXPERIENCE 1		Exploring Compassion	
PURPOSE			
<p>The focus of this first learning experience is to introduce students to SEE Learning through an exploration of compassion and why we need it for happiness and indeed survival. The foundation of SEE Learning is compassion and kindness, which stem from a consideration of others' well-being. From the start, it is important for students to develop a deeper understanding of what compassion is and what it is not. It is also important that they come to understand why we want compassion shown to us, why we need compassion to survive and thrive, and therefore why we should show it to others.</p>		<p>A fundamental point here is that we all want happiness and well-being, and none of us wants sadness, troubles, and difficulties. This means that we want others to be considerate of our well-being and happiness, which is the essence of compassion. As students come to recognize this, they can understand why they would want to show compassion to others, because they too want to be happy and don't want to suffer.</p>	
FRAMEWORK		PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS	
<p>For more context on the concepts behind this learning experience, please see the Framework, p. xx-xxx.</p>		<div></div> <p>Interpersonal Awareness (2A)</p>	
LEARNING OUTCOMES		ENDURING CAPABILITIES	
<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Investigate whether we all want happiness and well-being and don't want suffering</li><li>Investigate whether compassion is important for survival and happiness</li><li>Create a personal drawing of compassion that they can use as a resource</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>2A.1:</b> Attending to Our Social Reality</li><li><b>2A.2:</b> Attending to Our Shared Reality with Others</li><li><b>2C.2:</b> Appreciating and Cultivating Kindness and Compassion</li></ul>	
LENGTH		MATERIALS REQUIRED	
<p>30 minutes</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>One piece of drawing paper for each student</li><li>Pencils, markers or pens for drawing</li></ul>	

## Exploring Compassion

**CHECK-IN** | 3 minutes

Introduce SEE Learning, covering these points:

- *“This year we will be spending some time each week doing SEE Learning: Social, Emotional and Ethical Learning. SEE Learning uses science, activities, discussions and reflections to explore our world of thoughts, emotions, our relationships with each other, the decisions we make, and the impact those decisions have on ourselves and others.*
- *We’ll be learning about how to deal with strong emotions and stress, how to take care of ourselves and gain a better understanding of our bodies and minds, and how to get along better with other people or deal with things when we have trouble getting along with others.*
- *SEE Learning is divided into chapters, and in this first chapter we’ll be exploring the concept of compassion and how we can make this classroom a safe, happy and compassionate environment where we all feel respected, valued, and capable of learning and growing together.”*

**INSIGHT ACTIVITY** | 10 minutes**What We Have in Common?****Overview**

Students form a circle. The teacher will ask certain questions and if they apply to a student, he or she will step into the circle. If they don’t apply, the student will remain where they are. Then students will take a moment to notice who is on the inside and who is on the outside. This shows who shares that same trait or experience, and who doesn’t. The intention is that through various questions, students will come to the insight that while we have many differences, wanting happiness and kindness is something we all share in common.

Note that you will want to have a large enough area for students to gather in a large circle to step in and out of. You may need to move desks/tables. An option would be to do this activity outside, or in the gymnasium.

**Alternatives**

Instead of having students step in and step out of a circle, you can have students form a circle of chairs and have them stand up or remain seated. Or you could have them raise their hands instead of stepping

in. Whichever method you choose, make sure that students can see each other, so they can see how their classmates answer each question.

In addition to the questions given below in the sample script, add additional questions as you see fit and as time allows. You can also adapt the questions as necessary to your particular students. The point is to begin with things that the students might not all have in common, such as facts like birth month, eye color, etc., or preferences or aspects of their identity, but then move towards what we all have in common: that we want happiness and prefer kindness.

Pay attention if some students don’t step in when asked the final few questions: they may not have understood the questions. But do not feel the need to make students step in or to accept your conclusions: subsequent learning experiences will continue to explore the ideas of happiness and kindness in greater depth, so their views and feelings may change as their understanding progresses.

**Sample script:**

- *“If we’re going to respect and value each other, it can be really helpful to spend some time to learn about each other and find out what we have in common and where we are unique and different. So we’re going to do a short activity to explore that.*
- *Let’s all form a circle.*
- *If I say something that’s true for you, then you’ll step into the middle. Let’s start.*
- *Step in the center if you have a brother or sister.*
- *Now, stop and take a look and see who else has a brother or sister, or who else doesn’t. Now step back please.”*  
Add more factual things that the students might not all have in common, such as: riding the bus to school, wearing sneakers, wearing something with the color red, etc.
- *“Now, we’re going to think about some things that you like.*
- *Step in if you like pizza.*
- *Now, take a look and see who else likes pizza. Step back please.*
- *Step into the center if you like to play sports.*
- *Take a look and see who else likes to play sports. Now step back please.*



- *Step in the center if you like to play board games (or video games)*
- *Take a look and see who else likes those things. And step back please.*
- *Step in the center if you like to read books.*
- *Take a look and see who else likes those things. And step back please.*
- *I notice that only some people step in each time. Let's see what happens if I ask this: Step in if you like to be relaxed rather than stressed out.*
- *Now, take a look around. What do you notice about this?*
- *Ah, look! All of us (or most of us) are in the center! It seems like it's pretty common to want to feel relaxed rather than stressed.*
- *Step in if you feel better when you're happy than when you're sad.*
- *Let's look around. How many of us are here?*
- *Step in if you like it when people are kind and compassionate to you, rather than mean.*
- *Let's look around. Are we all here?*
- *It seems we like it when people are kind and compassionate to us. Now let's step back.*
- *Step in if you feel more relaxed and happier when people are kind to you, rather than when they are mean.*
- *Let's look around. It seems we all feel happier when people are kind to us.*
- *Let's have a seat now, and I'd like to ask you: why do you think all (or most) of us stepped in to the middle towards the end, when I asked questions about stress, happiness and compassion?"*

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### REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 12 minutes

#### Remembering, Drawing and Writing about Compassion\*

\*A repeatable activity

#### Overview

Students will discuss what it means to be kind and compassionate, then spend a moment thinking about a time when they experienced compassion from someone else or showed compassion to someone. They will then draw and write about that moment or act of compassion. Finally, they will then have an opportunity to share their drawing and the moment of compassion with their classmates as a whole or in pairs and talk about how it made them feel. The intention is that

through this activity, students will have some of the following insights: showing and receiving compassion increases our happiness; compassion and kindness are closely linked; we all want happiness, and therefore we all want compassion shown to us. Over the course of this first chapter of SEE Learning, students will explore and refine their understanding of compassion further.

#### Sample Script

- *"Let's go back to our desks.*
- *Remember how we saw that we all like it when people are kind and compassionate to us?*
- *What does it mean to be kind and compassionate?"*  
Allow a few responses.
- *"Do you think compassion involves being considerate of others and caring about their well-being?*
- *Can you give an example of this? Can you think of a moment in your life where you experienced someone showing compassion to you, or you showing compassion to someone else?"*  
Allow a few suggestions.
- *"That's great. Can you think of a moment in your life where you experienced compassion from someone else or you showed compassion to someone?*
- *Let's be silent for a moment and think. It could be something very special, or it could be something very simple.*
- *It could be someone who helped you or did something nice for you, or someone giving you something you needed or a present, even a smile when you needed it. Or it could be you doing one of these things for someone else.*
- *Try to think of a real example from your life, but if you can't think of anything even after a little while, then you can imagine something that you think would be compassionate."*
- *Allow some time for the students to think, from 15 seconds to a minute.*
- *"Now I'm going to give you some time to draw and write something about that moment.*
- *What did it look like? What did you look like?*
- *This is not a drawing competition and we're not going to judge each others' ability to draw. It's just to help you remember that moment. The point is that when we draw or write about an event, we discover more details and we actually begin to remember more. See if you notice anything more about what happened as you write or draw. Take a few moments to draw.*

Give students 3–4 minutes to draw, or longer as you see fit.

- *“Now take a few moments to write a few sentences about that moment. What happened? What did you feel? If there were other people there, how do you think they felt? Remember, there are no right or wrong answers here. Just share a few thoughts.”*  
Give students 2–3 minutes to write.

When it seems that most students are ready, invite them to share. For this, you can decide whether to have them share with the whole group, or to pair up and share with their partner. Depending on the size of your class and the reluctance of some students to talk in a large group, it may be better to ask them to pair up to talk first. Also, if you ask them to share with the entire group but no one volunteers, then rather than calling on someone to share, you can have them pair up.

Ask them to focus their sharing on “What happened? What did you feel? What do you think the other person(s) felt?” It will be helpful if you write these questions on the board or have on a piece of chart paper. If they pair up, ask each pair to decide who will share first, and give those who go first 1 or 2 minutes to share, focusing on those 3 questions, and then have them switch and give the other person the same amount of time to share. You can use a bell or some other sound to indicate the time to switch.

If during the sharing students share moments that you feel were not compassionate, or that made them feel bad, you can explain that compassion is based in consideration for the well-being of others, so we are looking for moments when others cared for us and we felt their care. However, since the class’s understanding of compassion will develop over the course of the learning experiences, it is not necessary to correct them at this point unless you feel it would be beneficial.

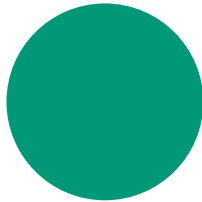
After students have shared, you can ask what they felt when they saw other students sharing their experiences of compassion, as it may have also made them feel happy, or it may have reminded them of times when they received compassion in a similar way. To facilitate this, you can model this first by sharing what you felt when you saw students sharing their moments of compassion.

This drawing and writing activity can be done more than once in different class sessions, but make sure to save at least one copy of the drawings as they will be used again in later learning experiences. The students can save their own drawing, you can hang them up on the wall with their permission, or you can collect them and distribute them again later when they are needed.

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#### DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- *“Let’s take a moment to think about what we discussed today. Is there anything that you heard that has stuck with you or seemed particularly important for your life? If so, you can share it in a word or phrase as we go around one by one. If not, you can pass.”*
- *Is there anything that you still have a question about or would like to talk more about next time? If so, you can share it in a single word, or you can pass.”*

CHAPTER 1		Creating a Compassionate Classroom	
LEARNING EXPERIENCE 2		Exploring Happiness	
PURPOSE			
<p>The focus of this first learning experience is to explore how we all want happiness and well-being, and how this is a basic orientation in our life and something that we share in common with all human beings and even animals. Understanding that we all want happiness is fundamental to understanding our need for compassion, since as social beings we depend on others for our happiness, and appreciate it when they show consideration for our well-being and happiness. The previous learning experience briefly explored our wish for happiness as something</p>		<p>we have in common. However, it is not always evident to us that our wish for happiness and to avoid unhappiness underlies all our motivations, emotions and actions, and that this is the same for others as well. It takes insight to see that <i>even when people do things that appear to be leading to pain and distress, their underlying motivation is relief, happiness and well-being</i>. This understanding in turn creates a powerful support for the future topics of self-compassion, empathy, and compassion for others.</p>	
FRAMEWORK		PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS	
<p>For more context on the concepts behind this learning experience, please see the Framework, p. xx-xxx.</p>		<div><p>Interpersonal Awareness (2A)</p></div>	
LEARNING OUTCOMES		ENDURING CAPABILITIES	
<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Investigate whether they want happiness and don't want distress</li><li>Explore whether the wish for happiness and to avoid distress is universal</li><li>Explore how this basic orientation underlies human activities, motivations and emotions</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>2A.2:</b> Attending to Our Shared Reality with Others</li></ul>	
LENGTH		MATERIALS REQUIRED	
<p>30 minutes</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A sign that says “Yes” and one that says “No” that can be placed on either end of a line (the line can be imaginary or can be created with colored tape on the ground).</li><li>Printouts of the “Happiness” sheet found at the end of this learning experience – one for each student.</li></ul>	

## Exploring Happiness

**CHECK-IN** | 4 minutes

- *“Who can remind us what we did last time in our SEE Learning session?”*

Last time we learned about what we have in common when it comes to compassion and happiness. We did the step in, step out activity and we also drew a moment when we experienced compassion.

**INSIGHT ACTIVITY** | 15 minutes**Stand by Your Experience\*****Overview**

In this activity, students will be given prompts that will encourage them to think about their wish for happiness, how universal it is, and the role it plays in their motivations and actions. They will be able to agree or disagree with the prompts and then explain why they feel the way they do with others and with the class. This activity is just the beginning of a process that may eventually lead to important critical insights: specifically, *that our wish for happiness and to avoid unhappiness is a central feature of our lives that we share with all other people, and it underlies our actions, our motivations, our hopes and our fears.*

*Please note:* this activity may lead to rich discussions that take time, and if you find you are having a rich discussion during the insight activity, consider extending the activity, eliminating the reflective practice, and ending the session with the debrief. Then come back to the activity the next time you meet, do the remaining prompts, and finish off the second time with the reflective practice.

Find a space in your room where students can stand in a straight line or a U-shape. Create two signs (Yes and No) and place them at opposite ends of the continuum. Let students know that they will be sharing their thoughts with each other and that while this activity is leading them in the direction of making official class agreements together, in the meantime, we need to be respectful of each other's voices and be kind to each other in our interactions. Ask for a consensus vote on the matter.

Read the first prompt below. Give students 10 seconds to think about it and ask them to think of an example before they move to stand by their answer. They may

stand anywhere on the continuum that fits with their experience. Once students are in place, ask them to turn and talk to one or two others who are near them and share where they are standing and why. (If a student is standing alone, the teacher should be her partner.) Invite 3–4 students from one end of the spectrum to the other to share out in order with the class. Encourage others to maintain an open mind. Invite students to move if they have changed their mind. Invite those who move to share what changed for them. Continue with the remaining prompts. Make sure all voices have been heard, at least once, if possible, and be careful of dominating voices.

**Sample script**

- *“For this activity, we will be sharing our experiences with each other. Though we don’t have formal class agreements with each other yet, this activity is going to help us make them together. Can we agree to be open-minded, kind and to listen to each other’s voices during this activity? (Ask for thumbs up to agree, thumbs down to disagree, and thumb in the middle if you’re not sure.) If you have consensus, proceed. If not, ask those who disagree or aren’t sure what other agreements they need to feel safe during this activity.*
- *I’m going to read you a statement about happiness. I want you to take 10 seconds to think about the statement, your experience with the statement, and an example you might talk about once you move.”*
- Read statement and wait 10 seconds.
- *“Now move to stand on the continuum where your experience is reflected. If you agree completely, stand by Yes. If you disagree completely, stand by No. If you’re undecided or if you’re somewhere between those two, then stand along the line in the middle or closer to Yes or closer to No.*
- *Turn and talk to the people close to you on the line. Why are you standing there? What experiences have you had that make you think or feel the way you do?*
- *Let’s come back together as a whole group – who would like to share? Let’s go from one end of the spectrum to the other. We have time for about 3–4 people. As you are listening to your peers share, think about if your answer is changed. I will give you a chance to move if you would like to.*
- *Please move now if your answer has changed. How and why did your answer change? If it did not, speak*

*about why you think that is.*

- *Repeat the above with the remaining prompts below.*
- *Debrief in a brief discussion: how did this activity change or reinforce your initial ideas about happiness?"*

### Statement prompts

- Everyone wants happiness.
- I know exactly what I need to make me happy.
- If I got what I think I need to make me happy, I would be happy forever.
- I can think of a time when something I thought would make me happy did not actually make me happy in the end.
- Sometimes people do things to be happy, but they end up hurting themselves or others in the process.
- Everyone wants to avoid distress and unhappiness.
- Our wish for happiness motivates us to do everything we do.

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### REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 8 minutes

#### Our Aspirations and Our Wish for Happiness

##### Overview

The insight activity should have begun the process of students thinking about happiness as a basic orientation in our lives. To reflect on this more deeply, this practice involves helping them connect this basic orientation towards happiness with those things they find most important and meaningful in their lives. The intention is for this to gradually lead to a deeper understanding of how our wish for happiness underlies all of our actions, aspirations, and concerns. The point, however, is not to try to convince students that each item they wrote down is connected to their underlying wish to be happy and avoid distress and unhappiness, but to invite a discussion and critical reflection about it.

##### Sample Script

- *"It seems we all want happiness and don't want distress, pain and difficulties.*
- *Can we connect this to our own personal lives and what we want and don't want in our lives?*
- *Sometimes we may not understand why we are doing what we're doing, but if we connect it to our basic wish for happiness, it can make more sense. We see that the things we feel are most important to us are actually connected to our wish for happiness and*

*well-being."*

- Provide handout with activities, hopes/dreams, and worries/concerns.
- *"On this sheet we have three categories. We're going to take a moment to silently think about what activities we like to do and think are important for us, like playing sports, being with friends, doing well in school, and so on.*
- *Then we're going to think about our hopes and wishes for this year. What do we want to accomplish? If we could achieve certain things by the end of this year, what would we want that to be?*
- *The last column is for worries and concerns. If you think about this coming year, do you have any specific worries or concerns?*
- *As you think and write, you should know that this is for yourself and no one else needs to see this unless you want to show it to someone.*
- *Let's begin now and let's do this in silence so that we can concentrate and reflect."*
- Give 3–4 minutes for this. You may wish to tell them when they have 30 seconds remaining that you will be wrapping up in 30 seconds.)
- *"Now let's look at what we wrote and see if each of the items we wrote down is related to our wish for happiness and to avoid distress, unpleasantness and unhappiness.*
- *If you see something that reflects this underlying wish, then you can circle it. If you see something that doesn't seem connected to your wish for happiness, or you're not sure, then you can put a question mark next to it."*
- Give one minute for this or more if necessary.
- *"Would anyone be willing to share one thing that they circled, tell us what it is, and explain how it connects to their wish for happiness?*
- *Would anyone be willing to share one thing that they put a question mark next to?"*

After students have shared, you can ask what they thought or felt when they saw other students sharing.

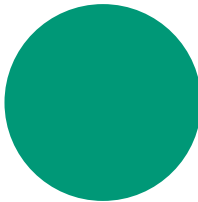
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### DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- *"Let's take a moment to think about what we discussed today. Is there anything that you heard that has stuck with you or seemed particularly important for your life? If so, you can share it in a word or phrase*

*as we go around one by one. If not, you can pass.*

- *Is there anything that you still have a question about or would like to talk more about next time? If so, you can share it in a single word, or you can pass.”*

CHAPTER 1	Creating a Compassionate Classroom	
LEARNING EXPERIENCE 3	Class Agreements	
PURPOSE	<p>The focus of this learning experience is to further explore the ideas of compassion, kindness and consideration, and how we all need these things and benefit from them, by creating a mutually agreed-on list of class agreements that will support a safe, productive learning environment. The creation of agreements by students helps them explore these concepts in a direct way that shows</p> <p>the clear implications of our need for compassion within the context of a shared space with others. It also increases their own investment in what is seen as constructive and non-constructive behavior in the classroom, since they can see how the items in the list directly impact themselves and others. It also orients students towards attending to the reality of others’ presence and their feelings and needs.</p>	
FRAMEWORK	<p>For more context on the concepts behind this learning experience, please see the Framework, p. xx-xxx.</p>	<div></div> <p>Interpersonal Awareness (2A)</p>
LEARNING OUTCOMES	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explore the practical implications of our need for compassion for how we act with each other</li><li>• Identify agreements the class will abide by that can help create a compassionate classroom</li></ul>	
LENGTH	<p>30 minutes</p>	
	<div><b>ENDURING CAPABILITIES</b></div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>2A.1:</b> Attending to Our Social Reality</li><li>• <b>2A.2:</b> Attending to Our Shared Reality with Others</li><li>• <b>2C.2:</b> Appreciating and Cultivating Kindness and Compassion</li></ul>	
	<div><b>MATERIALS REQUIRED</b></div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A piece of plain chart paper that can be hung on the wall with the header “In our classroom we agree to...”</li><li>• A board or a second piece of chart paper for scratch ideas.</li></ul>	



# Class Agreements

## CHECK-IN | 3 minutes

- “Who can remind us what we did last time in our SEE Learning session?”

Last time we talked about whether we all want happiness and to avoid distress, whether we share this with all people, and how this orientation towards happiness underlies all our actions, hopes, and concerns.

- Does anybody remember some of the things we talked about and shared?
- Do you think the world would be different if we showed each other more compassion, kindness and consideration? How?
- What about our school experience? How might it be different if we showed each other more compassion?
- To do that we have to think a bit about how exactly we would do it. In this session of SEE Learning we’re going to think about how we want to be with each other as a class to support each other’s happiness and our collective happiness.”

## INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 24 minutes

### Creating Classroom Agreements

#### Overview

Students will consider what would contribute to happiness and compassion in the classroom and make a list of class agreements. Our fundamental wish for happiness and well-being guides our actions, our aspirations, our fears, and indeed all our emotions. Moreover, because we are not isolated individuals but exist in families, societies, schools, and so on, others play an important role in our well-being and we play an important role in theirs. This implies we naturally want others to be considerate of our well-being and we must be considerate in how we treat others in return: the recognition of this reciprocity forms a foundation for compassion. As you create the class agreements, help students recognize that they are guided by these fundamental concepts of our fundamental wish for happiness and well-being, our social nature, reciprocity, and our need for consideration from others and to show consideration to others. The critical insights aimed for in this activity are: *that we share common needs like respect, safety, and so on, based on our underlying wish for happiness and well-being and to avoid distress; that because we exist with others, our wish for happiness and our common needs means that we want*

*compassion, consideration and kindness shown to us; and that because we want such things for ourselves, reciprocity means that we should also show such compassion, consideration, and kindness to others.*

- “When we met last time and lined up on the continuum it looked like we all want to feel happy and avoid distress, is that right? and we talked about the possibility that wanting to be happy might motivate all the things we think about and do. So I’m wondering how do other people fit in? (Take some comments if there are some.) If we could exist by ourselves, maybe we wouldn’t have to worry as much about how we treat others or how we want them to treat us. But the fact is we live with other people around us all the time, don’t we?
- I like to be treated kindly and respectfully. Do you? It’s natural that we want others to treat us with kindness, consideration, respect and compassion—not meanness, a lack of consideration, and disrespect.
- If I treat you meanly or disrespectfully, how are you likely to feel? Will you want to be kind to me?
- Have you ever heard of the word “reciprocity”? It means to give back something equal to what you received and it’s a bit like fairness. So if I am kind to you, you are more likely to be kind to me. And vice versa. (If you like, ask them if they can provide a few examples of reciprocity or a lack of reciprocity? If you feel the concept of reciprocity is too complex at this point for your class, skip this point and return to it later.) What some people call the Golden Rule is a good example of this idea.
- Let’s try to make this concrete by making a list of agreements of how we would like our class to be – how we’d like to treat each other and be treated.
- What might we put on the list that we will agree to do as a class so that the happiness and well-being of each of us can be respected and supported? So that we can have a safe and compassionate classroom?”

Take lots of suggestions and start a list on a board or the piece of scratch chart paper where all the students can see it. If needed, you can prompt the students with possible ideas, such as:

- kindness
- having fun
- not bullying
- not making fun of each other



- helping each other
- sharing/taking turns
- showing respect for each other
- listening to each other
- not being mean
- not shouting
- asking for help
- paying attention
- saying sorry

When a student suggests something, use it as an opportunity to have the students delve deeper by prompting them with one or two questions like:

- *What does that mean?*
- *What does that look like?*
- *What would happen if we all did that?*
- *What would happen if we didn't do that?*

You can allow any student to answer these follow-up questions, not just the one who made the initial suggestion. For example, if a student says, "Be kind," you can say, "That's a great idea. And what does kindness look like?" and then ask, "Why would it be important for us to be kind?" Or if they said, "Helping each other," you could say, "What does it look like when we help each other?" and then "What would happen if we didn't help each other?" This way the students will see more clearly the implications of each class agreement.

Once you have a number of ideas on the chart, you can ask the students to help you group them together so that you have fewer agreements that are more concise. Write these on the piece of chart paper that has the heading "In our classroom we agree to..." It will be helpful if you can put them into action statements that are in the affirmative, like "Be kind" or "Be helpful" or "Ask for help when we need it," instead of "Don't bully." But if you can't get them all perfect at this point, don't worry, because you can consolidate and wordsmith them on your own after class, and there will also be time in future learning experiences to revise them with the class. At the end of the class, or after class, however, you should come up with a preliminary clean version of the class agreements that you can put up on the class wall and use in the following learning experiences. *Aim for no more than six class agreements.*

- *"This is a good beginning. Maybe we can put some of these together if they are similar, so that we can have a few main agreements that we can remember."*
- *On this sheet it says, "In our classroom we agree to..." So we can put our agreements after that from the list we just created.*
- *And we can put them in this form of affirmative statements, so instead of saying what we don't want, we say what we do want.*

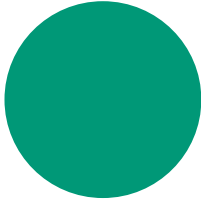
Continue this process as time allows.

- *"Now we have some agreements we can make with each other."*
- *Let's take a look at them and read them out loud together."*  
You can have each agreement read by a different student.
- *"We're going to try to do this for ourselves so we can all feel safe, respected and cared for in this classroom, and so we can learn to help each other as we learn and grow together."*
- *It's okay if we're missing some things. Let's keep thinking about this list until we meet again, when we might have more to add."*

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#### DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- *"As we talked about, this year we are going to learn about how best to be kind, compassionate, and considerate to ourselves and others. We'll be learning many ways to do this, and this agreement that we created together is our first step."*
- *In one word or sentence, is there anything you learned today that you might use another time to help yourself or someone else meet their needs?"*  
Ask students to share out or write in their journals.

CHAPTER 1	Creating a Compassionate Classroom	
LEARNING EXPERIENCE <b>4</b>	<h1>Defining Compassion</h1>	
<b>PURPOSE</b>	<div> <div> <p>The focus of this fourth learning experience is to go further into the idea of compassion by exploring whether it refers to outer actions and behaviors or to an inner motivation and emotion. We easily associate compassion with external activities, like giving someone food or money, saying sweet words to someone, or helping someone up when they fall. But if the intention behind those actions and words is to take advantage of the other person, then we</p> </div> <div> <p>do not see that as compassion; nor do we see it as genuine help. For students to understand how to cultivate compassion as an inner quality, which lies at the heart of SEE Learning, they will be aided by understanding that compassion goes deeper than just external actions but refers to a state of mind and heart: compassion is one's intention to relieve the suffering of another out of a genuine concern for their well-being.</p> </div> </div>	
<b>FRAMEWORK</b>	<b>PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS</b> <div>  <p>Compassion for Others (2C)</p> </div>	
<b>LEARNING OUTCOMES</b>	<div> <div> <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore compassion in the context of outer actions and inner intentions and motivations</li> <li>Provide examples of actions that might not seem compassionate, but actually are, and vice versa</li> <li>Identify common misconceptions of compassion</li> <li>Develop a working definition of compassion</li> </ul> </div> <div> <b>ENDURING CAPABILITIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>2C.2:</b> Appreciating and Cultivating Kindness and Compassion</li> </ul> </div> </div>	
<b>LENGTH</b>	<b>MATERIALS REQUIRED</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A few pieces (2–3) of chart paper or a board to write on</li> <li>The compassion drawings made in Learning Experience 1.</li> </ul>	

# Defining Compassion

## CHECK-IN | 3 minutes

- *“Let’s take a moment to sit quietly and rest our minds and bodies so that we can think a bit.*
- *Now let’s all see if we can think of any moments of kindness or compassion in the day so far. Maybe something happened at home or on your way to school or as recently as just a minute ago. See what comes up for you. Don’t worry if you can’t think of something, you can always imagine a moment of kindness or compassion too.”*  
Pause.
- *“Let’s sit with your moment for a little bit.*
- *Would anyone like to share what they remembered or felt?”*
- If necessary you can also review what happened last session: *“Last time we talked about how we could create a compassionate classroom and we created some classroom agreements. Who remembers some of the things we talked about?”*

## INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 15 minutes

### Scenarios

#### Overview

In this activity, you will read one (or more) scenarios to the students that shows how we all naturally prefer kindness, consideration, and compassion, because they makes us feel safe and secure, but that we also want genuine kindness, not just apparent kindness. Our preference for kindness is something so basic that we even share it with birds and mammals, who prefer those who protect and feed them over those who threaten them. Scenarios are provided for you here to generate discussions around our preference for kindness and compassion, and how genuine kindness and compassion refer to inner qualities. If someone pretends to be compassionate, but really intends to take advantage of someone, then we do not see that as genuine compassion. If students come to understand that compassion is an inner quality, not just apparently kind actions, then they will realize that to cultivate compassion, we need to cultivate that inner quality, not just act outwardly in a particular way or adhere to certain behaviors. The questions after the scenarios are intended to elicit these *critical insights*:

- we naturally prefer kindness and compassion and want to move towards them and away from meanness
- kindness and compassion make us feel safer and more secure
- compassion is an inner quality
- pretend kindness (outward actions without a good intention) is not genuine compassion

Feel free to modify details from the scenario to suit your class and school. If you have time, it is can be even more effective if you have some students act out the scenarios. In that case, you may want to re-cast the scenarios as scripts.

### Scenario 1: The Rich Woman and the Charity

A representative from a charity goes to a wealthy woman (or man) to ask for a donation to assist people who are homeless.

“I know you’ve been very generous to charities in the past,” the representative said. “Please would you give us a donation? It would make a big difference to a lot of people who are in need.”

“How will I be recognized if I make a donation?” the woman asked. “It’s important that people know that I made the donation, not someone else.”

“The homeless people you help will all be so grateful, and they will all be told that it was you who helped them,” said the representative.

“But I want other people to know too, not just the homeless people,” she said. “Will it be in the news?” “Oh yes,” said the representative said. “And if your donation is large enough, you will be specially honored at our annual party celebration with a trophy.” The woman smiled. “In that case, I agree.”

### Scenario 2: The Basketball Captain and the Recruit

The captain of the basketball (or another sports) team sees potential in a new student and really wants her (or him) to join the team, thinking it will help the team win the championship that year. The new student doesn’t particularly want to join, though, and tells the captain this. The captain gets the members of the team to be

really nice to the new student, giving her presents, saying all sorts of nice things to her.

### Scenario 3: The Two Brothers and the Kitten

Two brothers were playing in a park one day and when they saw a beautiful little kitten. The older brother thought, “Oh, what a pretty kitten!” and he wanted to capture it for himself, so he threw a stick at it and started to chase it. The kitten got scared and tried to run away, but since it couldn’t run very well yet, it had trouble escaping him.

The younger brother said, “Stop! Don’t hurt the kitten! It’s only a baby!” and he went to go and help the kitten and protect it. When he reached the kitten, he petted it and offered it some food. But the older brother got angry and kept trying to get at the kitten and catch it. Then their mother came by and said, “What’s going on?”

“That kitten is mine,” said the older brother, who wanted to capture it. “I saw it first! Make him give it to me!”

“No, don’t give it to him,” said the younger brother. “He tried to hurt it.”

“I don’t know what happened because I wasn’t here to see it,” said the mother. “Maybe we should let the kitten decide.”

The older brother who had tried to hurt and capture the kitten tried to call to her sweetly. “Please come to me little kitten! I will take good care of you!”

The mother placed the kitten between the two boys to see who it would go to, and she said to it, “Who do you choose?”

### Discussion of Scenario(s)

- *“How do you think the different people in the scenario were feeling?”*  
Go through the different characters in the scenario.  
*“If they could talk to us, what would they be saying?”*
- *“What do you think might happen next in the scenario?”*
- *“Did you see examples of kindness or compassion in the story? Why or why not?”*

- *“Is compassion just the outer action, like sweet words or making a donation, or is it also something inside us? An inner quality? What would we call it – an emotion, a motivation, a thought, an intention? Some or all of these?”*

Note that you are prompting thinking but not seeking a single “right” answer at this point, so welcome all thoughts.

- *“Can you think of other examples where someone pretends to be kind, but their intention is not compassionate?”*

Someone helping or donating to charity just to look good, etc.

- *“What about the reverse? Could something that looks unkind on the surface really be compassionate? Can you think of an example?”*

A parent saying “No” to their child to protect them; someone scaring away animals who are moving towards danger; someone taking away a dangerous object from a little child even though the child wants it; etc.

These are a few sample questions you can use to have a discussion and encourage the students to explore the scenario and its various dimensions. Feel free to add your own questions and respond to the flow of the discussion. Allow them to share openly and remember that there are no right or wrong answers, but also keep in mind the critical insights (listed above) that you are orienting them towards. These insights have to come naturally, and it’s all right if not all the students reach all the insights at once, since they will be returned to continuously in future learning experiences.

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## REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 10 minutes

### Defining Compassion

#### Overview

If we want to understand the relationship between compassion and happiness, and if we want to learn how best to be compassionate to others and ourselves, so that we can be happy, it helps to begin to develop our understanding of compassion in a richer way. Compassion has many dimensions that will be explored in SEE Learning. In this reflective practice, you will help the students make a word map of the word “compassion.” This will be used to develop a definition of compassion (one or two sentences) for

use in the classroom as they go through SEE Learning. The students will take moments for silent reflection during the making of this definition and after making it, to allow this wider understanding of compassion to deepen in them.

**Note:** Many of the reflective practices in SEE Learning involve moments of silent reflection for students to think, ponder, and internalize their insights. How long these moments should be will depend on the classroom environment and your students. They can be as short as 15 seconds or can be as long as a few minutes. You will be the best judge of the appropriate amount of time. You may find that with practice, the students will get more comfortable and familiar with these moments, and that you can prolong them for longer periods of time.

#### Sample Script

- *“The scenarios helped us figure out what is and isn’t kindness and compassion. We’ve talked about how important kindness and compassion is to our happiness, but even though we use these words, sometimes we don’t think that deeply about what they mean.”*
- *“Since we’re going to be exploring compassion throughout SEE Learning, it might help if we defined what we mean by it. If someone asked you what compassion means, what would you tell them?”*
- *“I wonder if we could come up with a one sentence definition of what compassion is. Let’s take a quiet moment to think about what we learned from the scenarios and our discussion.”*
- *“I’m going to write the word compassion in the middle of the board, and you can suggest **words that are like compassion that we can use to explain it.**”*

Write the word “Compassion” in the middle of a piece of chart paper or on the board. Then take suggestions and write the other words or phrases around the word “compassion.” You can use lines to connect them to the word compassion. This will create a kind of word map on the paper. If the students mentioned words in the discussion related to the critical insights listed above, but do not mention them now, you can prompt them by saying, “Remember someone said something about how compassion is an inner quality, not just words and actions. Should we add something about that?” But

allow the students to come up with their own words and ways of expressing what compassion means.

- *“Is compassion just the outer action, like sweet words or making a donation, or is it also something inside us? An inner quality? What would we call it – an emotion, a motivation, a thought, an intention? Some or all of these?”*

Since it may be difficult for the students to come up with a one sentence definition on their own, you can propose different wordings that incorporate some of the words they have provided. If necessary, you can group those words together to make it easier first. Don’t worry if you can’t come up with a perfect definition right away. Also, if you cannot come up with one in class, you can come up with one later on your own that uses the input they provided and that is now recorded on the chart paper, and then propose it to them in a future class. When you have collectively come up with your short definition, however tentative, write it on a new piece of chart paper and allow the students a minute of silence to reflect on it.

- *“So this is what we think compassion is for now. We might think of other things later. Let’s take a moment to quietly read this and think about what compassion means and how important it is for us. Let’s do this silently so that we can really get a feel for compassion and what it means inside ourselves and in our lives.”*  
Allow time for silent reflection.

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#### DEBRIEF | 2 minutes

- Students have the choice to debrief on their own, with a partner of their choice, or in a sharing circle with the right to pass.
- *“Is there anything you learned today that you’d like to remember or use in the future?”*

# Recognizing Kindness and Compassion

## PURPOSE

The focus of this learning experience is to practice recognizing kindness and compassion in its various forms in one's life. Although we are surrounded by acts of kindness every day, we often do not recognize these acts of kindness or we take them for granted. Although students will already have some notions of what kindness and compassion look like, by looking deeper at everyday activities and seeing the various ways kindness is involved, their appreciation for kindness can grow further. In SEE Learning, capacities like our ability to recognize kindness are approached as skills that, while innate, can also be strengthened and enhanced through repeated practice. Practicing the skill of recognizing kindness in its various forms can lead to a deeper appreciation for how essential kindness is to our everyday life, our happiness, and even our very

survival. Learning to recognize how everyday actions and objects are made possible through the kindness of others also prepares students for two important topics that come later in the curriculum: appreciating interdependence and cultivating gratitude.

**Note:** in SEE Learning, kindness and compassion are treated similarly in the beginning, as both are inner qualities oriented towards the well-being of another. Kindness has a more generalized meaning of care and concern for another, whereas compassion involves being able to see the distress of others and the causes of their distress, and having a motivation and inner courage to relieve that distress and its causes. Extended compassion, as will be shown, also involves reducing bias, identifying with others, and recognizing common humanity.

## FRAMEWORK

For more context on the concepts behind this learning experience, please see the Framework, p. xx–xxx.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

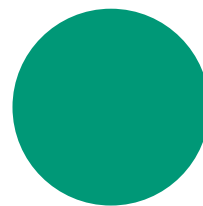
Students will:

- Recognize acts of kindness and compassion in their day
- Recognize how the objects they need and use daily come from the acts of kindness of others
- Apply their understanding of kindness to objects in the classroom and everyday activities

## LENGTH

30 minutes

## PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Interpersonal Awareness  
(2A)

## ENDURING CAPABILITIES

- **2A.1:** Attending to Our Social Reality
- **2C.2:** Appreciating and Cultivating Kindness and Compassion

## MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Writing paper and pencils or pens for each student.



# Recognizing Kindness and Compassion

## CHECK-IN | 3 minutes

- *“Can anyone remember what we said compassion means? We created a way of explaining it to others. Who remembers what we said?”*
- *Let’s look at our explanation of what compassion is now. I wrote it up on this piece of paper.*
- *Compassion and kindness seem to be closely linked, although as we go along we’re going to explore some of the various aspects of compassion more deeply.*
- *Have any of you felt kindness or compassion today? Yes? What was it like? If you can’t think of a moment of kindness or compassion from today, you can imagine one if you like.*
- *Let’s take a moment to sit for a few seconds and remember what kindness and compassion feel like. If you are comfortable with it, close your eyes and really try to picture that moment when someone was kind or compassionate to you or when you felt kind or compassionate towards someone else. Or if you are using your imagination, just imagine that moment.”* Pause.
- *Debrief: “Thank you. Can some of you give share some of the acts of kindness or compassion that you thought of?”*

Use your discretion in guiding this, as you know your own class. Encourage them to think of any moment – no matter how small. It could be the crossing guard who smiled at them, or they handed someone a marker when they needed it, or they smiled at someone they don’t usually pay attention to. Let your students know that it’s okay if they can’t think of a time, because they can imagine one. As you practice with this, it will get easier. Encourage curiosity: the feeling that we’re all just exploring and wondering about this together.

It’s possible you may wish to do the check in during a morning meeting time, and then save the other parts of the learning experience for later in the day. That way, children will already be oriented towards thinking about kindness when you come to the activities.

## INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 15 minutes

### Recognizing Kindness

#### Overview

In this activity you will invite students to share moments of kindness that they observed or participated in during the day, guiding them to reflect on how it made them and others feel, and challenging them to recognize as many forms of kindness as they can. You will then move on to objects, helping them recognize that the everyday objects around us that we need and use are actually the result of acts of kindness also. The critical insight you are aiming for is that *we see countless acts of kindness around us every day, but we may recognize very few of them if we do not look deeply.* As in every insight activity, students may have other critical insights as you go along – if so, record them or note them on the board so that you can return to them later. You can begin by asking them how many acts of kindness you think the class will come up with from just things that happened to them today and write the numbers they propose on the board. Then, at the end of the activity, ask them if they think their original guesses were correct, too low, or too high.

#### Sample script

- *“So, I have a question for you. If you think about our day together in school, how many moments of kindness or compassion do you think you could count? 10? 20?”* Let them make guesses and write the numbers on the board or chart paper.
- *“Ok I’m going to write those numbers down on the board here so we can check them again later.”*
- *“Now, let’s see how many acts of kindness we can come up with.”*
- *“Who can think of something that happened today that was an example of kindness or compassion? Did anyone show you kindness or compassion today? Or did you do anything that was kind or compassionate for someone else? Remember kindness can be as simple as a friendly smile, or giving someone something that you see they need.”*
- Allow for student sharing. If you like you can write a single word or phrase that captures what was shared on the board so that a list begins to grow. After the student has shared, you can ask follow up questions, such as: *“Why was that kind? How did it make you feel? How do you think it made the other person feel?”*
- You can ask these follow-up questions to other

students as well, not just the student who shared, so that they can think about the various ways the action was kind and how it might have made others feel.

- *“Now let’s try to look more deeply. I wonder if we can find even more acts of kindness and compassion?”*
- *Do you think there might have been kindnesses that we didn’t even know about or notice?”*

At this point, you can do the activity as a whole class activity, or you can have the students pair up and do it as pairs.

After a few minutes of this, or if the students run out of examples, transition to objects. One way to do this might be to use a moment of kindness mentioned above as a starting point (see the example of pencil sharpening below). The point of this next part of the activity is to recognize that objects we need and use every day actually are the results of the acts of kindness of other people. This means we can learn to see the results of kindness right in front of our eyes, even when it isn’t directly being acted out in a visible way. The idea of “looking deeply” is important. Many activities in SEE Learning will encourage this kind of deeper reflection.

- *“\_\_\_\_\_ (student’s name) sharpened the pencils (or took down the chairs, passed out the paper, etc). That was a kind act. What about the pencils (chairs, paper) themselves? Who made the pencil and how did we get them?”*
- *Do you think we needed other people to have these pencils or these chairs? Can we see it as an act of kindness that people made these chairs for us?”*
- *What other things in this room do we have because of other people’s kindness?”* Continue for a few minutes. There will be so many things – you might ask students to keep count.

If the students do not see objects as acts of kindness because they were not created intentionally for them, then you can ask if it’s necessary for someone to be intentionally kind in order for us to be able to appreciate what they did. Are we able to appreciate things even if the person who did or created them didn’t actually intend to benefit us personally?

At the end, debrief as a whole class:

- *“Did we find a lot of acts of kindness when we **looked deeply**? So many people helped us by making these things and giving them to us so we could use them. How does it feel to know that we are surrounded by so many acts of kindness?”*
- *Now, let’s see. How many did we find? Did we find more than we thought we would?”* You can compare with the numbers the students suggested earlier and that you wrote on the board.
- *“It seems we can find a lot of acts of kindness if we look for them. But if we don’t look, we might not see them!”*
- *A lot of times, if people aren’t looking deeply, they might just see a chair and not an act of kindness. But if we look deeply, we can see that the things we need everyday came from acts of kindness. That’s something we’re going to practice in our class from now on. In fact, we’re going to do a little practice right now.”*

---

## REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 8 minutes

### Recognizing Kindness from Objects and Actions\*

#### Overview

Like any skill, looking deeply for acts of kindness is something we can practice and get better at. In this activity, students have a chance to reflect individually and to go deeper into the practice of looking deeply in order to see acts of kindness that might otherwise have been missed. Each of them will have their own piece of paper to write and draw on. The task will be to see how many acts of kindness they can find in the things they used today and in the actions they saw.

\*The asterisk by this practice denotes that it can be repeated multiple times (with or without modifications). One modification for this reflective practice is to have the students divide into groups of 3 to 5 (by table, for example) and have them draw and write together on a larger piece of paper.

- *“For this activity we’re going to be quiet and think a bit. We’re going to think about the things we did today since we got up early in the morning. We’re hunting for acts of kindness. If you can think of one you didn’t think of before write or draw it on your*



*paper. I'll give you 3 minutes and let's see what you can come up with."*

- Prompt if necessary: *"Maybe you used something like a toothbrush or a cup. Was that object the result of someone's kindness? Did someone give it to you? Did someone have to make it? If you used something that came to you because of kindness, you can draw that or write that down too. How did you get to school? Was someone kind to bring you to school or help you get here? If so, you can draw or write that too."*
  - *Let's be quiet for a moment while we think, write and draw.*
  - As the students write and draw silently, you can go from student to student to check in on them and make sure they are understanding the activity.
- 

#### **DEBRIEF** | 4 minutes

- *"Look at your collection of kindnesses. Do you have a favorite one or one you'd like to share? Let's go around and when it's your turn you can say one out loud or just say pass if you're not ready to share."*
- Invite them to share.
- *"Is there anything else you learned or heard today that you'd like to remember or use in the future?"*

## CHAPTER 1

## Creating a Compassionate Classroom

### LEARNING EXPERIENCE

# 6

# Practicing Kindness and Compassion

### PURPOSE

The focus of this learning experience is to build on prior learning and engage in the actual modeling and practice of kindness and compassion for experiential and embodied understanding. This involves two steps: an insight activity whereby the students translate the class agreements into practical examples that can be acted out; and then a practice activity where they act out those examples in front of each other in the form of frozen scenes or “tableaux.” By acting out the very same items they said they wanted in the classroom, they will come to a better understanding of kindness and compassion, of their class agreements, and of how they look in

practice. This process of embodied understanding should continue as the school year goes on and will make it easier to refer to the class agreements concretely throughout the year.

After going through the learning experiences in this first chapter once, you may wish to return to certain activities and reflective practices again to build up more knowledge, insights and embodied understanding. The practices from the first chapter marked with an asterisk are particularly suitable for being repeated with or without modifications.

### FRAMEWORK

For more context on the concepts behind this learning experience, please see the Framework, p. xx–xxx.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Develop specific ways of exhibiting kindness and compassion based on the class agreements
- Apply their understanding of kindness and compassion in concrete individual and collective actions

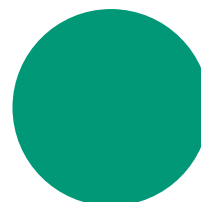
### LENGTH

30 minutes

### MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Your class agreements listed on a piece of chart paper or on the board.
- Another piece of chart paper or a board to write ideas for practicing the class agreements.

### PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Relationship Skills  
(2E)

### ENDURING CAPABILITIES

- 2C.2: Appreciating and Cultivating Kindness and Compassion
- 2C.3: Helping Others
- Note: Depending on what class agreements your class decides on, your class may already be practicing additional enduring capabilities, such as empathic listening, skillful communication and so on.

# Practicing Kindness and Compassion

## CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- “Let’s take a moment to sit quietly and rest our minds and bodies so that we can think a bit.
- Now let’s all see if we can think of any moments of kindness or compassion in the day so far. Maybe something happened at home or on your way to school or as recently as just a minute ago. See what comes up for you. Don’t worry if you can’t think of something, you can always imagine a moment of kindness or compassion too.” Pause
- “Let’s sit with your moment for a little bit.
- Would anyone like to share what they thought of?
- How did that make you feel?”

## INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 10 minutes

### Translating Class Agreements into Concrete Helping Actions\*

#### Overview

This activity involves starting to translate the class agreements into concrete actions and behaviors that the students can practice doing with each other, thereby making the class agreements “visible” in a direct way. Depending on the class agreements, sometimes the actions will be obvious. In this case, ask students to give examples so that their understanding grows of how they might practice it. For example, if one of the class agreements is “Listen to each other,” you can ask them to be very specific about the actions that this would involve by asking questions like, “What does it look like when we listen to each other?” or “What do we do with our eyes when we listen? Do we look at the other person?” or “Do we talk while we’re listening to the other person or are we quiet?” If one of the class agreements is “Help each other,” then you could similarly ask, “What are some ways we could help each other? What does that look like?” If a class agreement is, “Don’t be mean,” then you could ask, “What could we do if we saw someone and we thought they were being mean?” The sample script provides some further examples of questions you could use to prompt them to think in this way.

As the students give examples, document what they are saying by writing or drawing the examples on a piece of chart paper and link them to the class agreements that they reflect. That way the students

can see the class agreement taking shape in the form of actions and behaviors. By the end you should have a few examples for each class agreement, although if you and the class cannot come up with examples for each agreement, that is fine. You likely will not have enough time to complete translating all the agreements in one session, in which case you can move on to the reflective practice for now and return to this activity again later.

#### Sample script

- “I realized that even though we can all say \_\_\_\_\_ (Choose one from your list, for example: “help each other”) we don’t always know exactly what that looks like. Let’s take another look at our class agreements that we made together and see if we can be more specific about some of them.
- What would it look like to \_\_\_\_\_ (help each other)? Can we turn the idea of \_\_\_\_\_ (helping each other) into real helping actions? What does it look like when we \_\_\_\_\_ (help each other)? How does it make us feel to receive help? To give help?
- If we saw someone not \_\_\_\_\_ (helping), what could we say or do?”

Try this format with several of the class agreements. When you come to a good stopping point, you can suggest returning to the rest of the agreements during other class meeting times. Eventually you will have specific ideas connected to each general agreement.

## REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 13 minutes

### Acting Out Kindness and Compassion\*

The point of reflective practices in SEE Learning is to allow students to practice things that they have learned so that they can become embodied and habitual. In this practice, the students will form groups of three or five. Give them three minutes to come up with a “tableau.” A tableau is a frozen scene or static body sculpture where the students stand motionless and silent in various postures to enact a particular scene. In this case, the tableau will be modeling a particular helping action that you have identified from the classroom agreements. Once the groups have come up with their idea for a tableau, you will go around group by group and have them show their tableau. While one group is

showing their tableau, ask the other students, “What do you see and feel?” and “Which helping action from our list do you think they are exhibiting?” Allow students one minute or so to share their thoughts. After that the students doing the tableau can briefly share which helping action they had intended to show and how they felt while enacting the tableau. Then move on to the next tableau.

If the students need guidance, you can suggest that it may work to have one person pretend to be in need and have one or two other students see that need and engage in the helping actions.

#### Sample script

- *“We came up with a lot of ideas on how we can help each other here in the class. Now we can see more clearly what these class agreements will look like.*
- *It might be even more clear if we demonstrated a few of the helping actions we just talked about.*
- *Let’s get into groups and we’re going to have each group create a tableau.*
- *A tableau is a term used in theater performance. It means a motionless or frozen scene. You create the tableau with your bodies, holding them in a particular posture to demonstrate a scene that shows the helping action you’ve chosen. So you’ll need to choose one helping action that we made in our list and then come up with a way of showing that to us without speaking or moving. The rest of us will try to guess what you are showing. Let’s take about 3 minutes to choose and practice. If only 2 people in your group need to be involved directly in the helping action, the others can help to make the scene look real in the way they sit or stand. If you are one of the “supporting cast”, try to imagine what the person you are depicting might actually be thinking and feeling, so you can make it more real.”*
- Watch and discuss the tableau.

Remember that you can repeat this activity more than once if you wish to cover more helping actions.

#### DEBRIEF | 3 minutes

- *“Let’s take a moment to sit and think about what we just saw and felt.*
- *Did you notice how you felt when you saw people needing help or getting help?*
- *Is there anything you heard, saw or learned that you might like to use again sometime?*
- *Is there anything you think we should add to the class agreements after what we did today?”*



**SEE Learning**

Social, Emotional, and  
Ethical Learning

*A Curriculum for Educating the Heart and Mind*

MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 2

# Building Resiliency

## Introduction to the Chapter

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Chapter 1 explored the concepts of compassion and happiness and what they mean for us when we are together in the form of class agreements. Chapter 2 explores the important role that our bodies, and in particular our nervous systems, play in our happiness and well-being. It does so by exploring a few key concepts and practices:

### **The Resilient Zone**

A way of describing when the nervous system is regulated (in homeostasis) and neither hyper-aroused (stuck in the high zone) nor hypo-aroused (stuck in the low zone). You can also refer to this as the “OK zone” or “zone of well-being.”

### **Sensations**

A physical feeling or perception within the body or using the five senses, as distinct from emotions and non-physical feelings (like feeling happy or sad).

### **Tracking**

Noticing and attending to sensations in the body in order to build up body awareness or “body literacy.”

### **Personal Resources**

Things one likes and associates with greater safety and well-being that can be brought to mind to return to or stay in one’s resilient zone.

### **Grounding**

Attending to the contact of one’s body with objects or the ground in order to return to or stay in the resilient zone.

### **Help Now! Strategies**

Simple and immediate techniques for helping students return to their resilient zone when they get “bumped out” of that zone.

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## The Nervous System

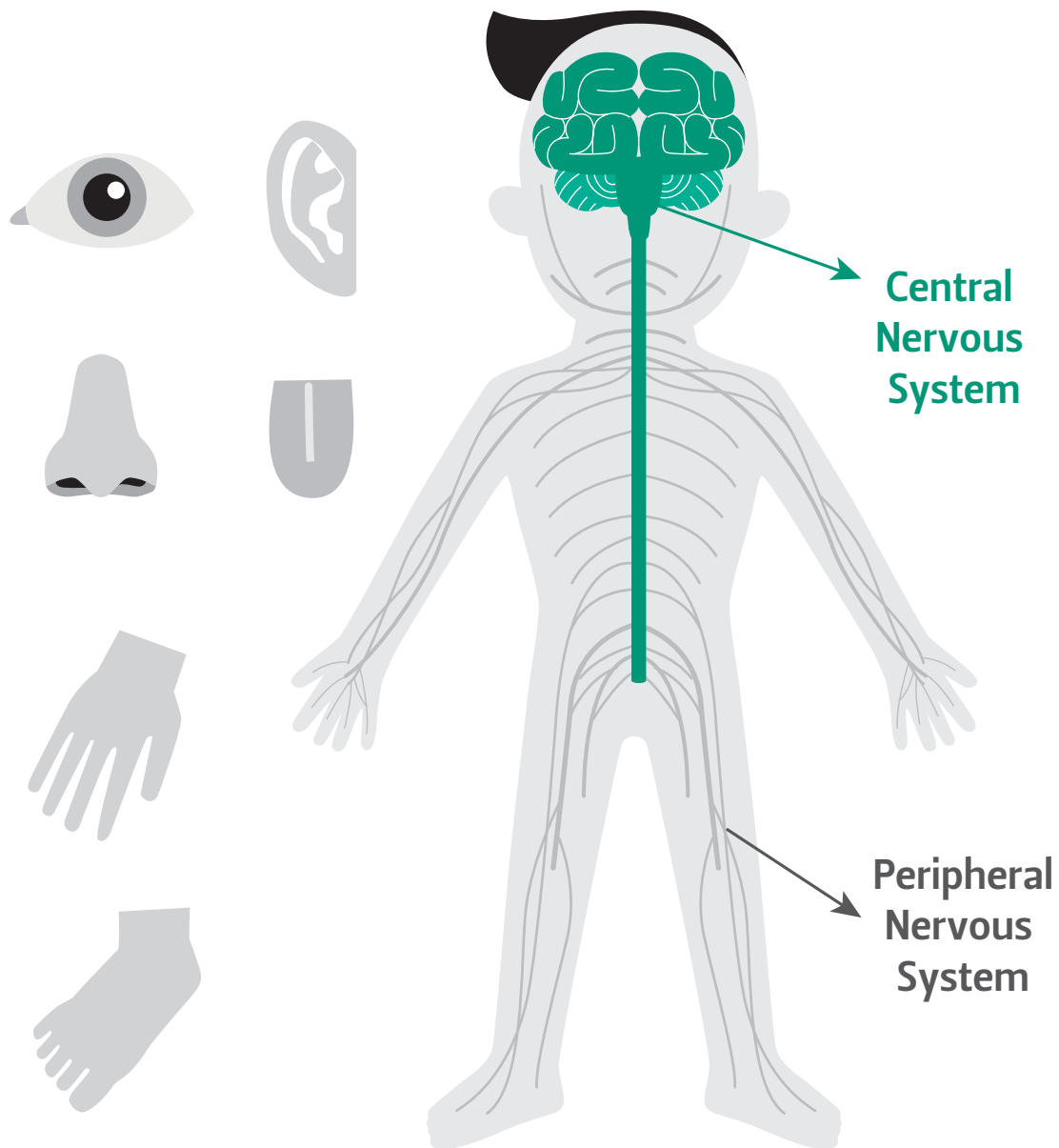
Our nervous system is an essential part of our body, and understanding it can be enormously helpful for enhancing our well-being, particularly as the nervous system is so intimately related to how we handle and process stress. Our nervous system is made up of our brain and our spinal cord (called the central nervous system) and the network of nerves that connect our brain and spinal cord to the rest of our body, including our internal organs and our senses (called the peripheral nervous system). This chapter focuses on teaching your students about the nervous system both through basic science (objective knowledge) and through their own personal experience of gaining body awareness or body literacy (subjective, first-person knowledge). The combination of these two can help your students learn to regulate their bodies and nervous systems more effectively on their own over time.

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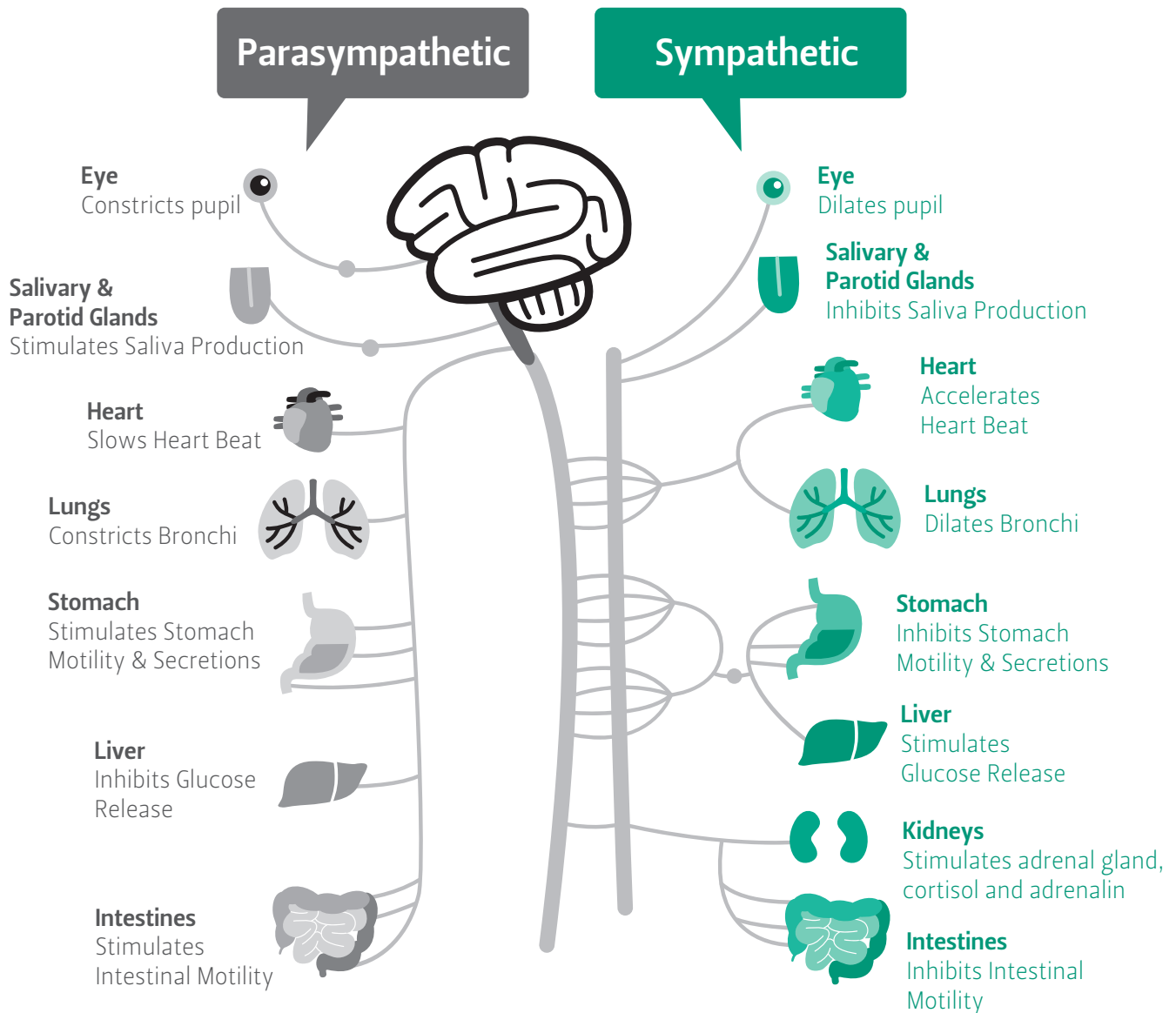
# The Nervous System

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The Central and the Peripheral



# The Autonomic Nervous System





A part of our nervous system runs automatically, without the need for conscious control: this is called the autonomic (literally, “self-governing”) nervous system (ANS). Our ANS regulates many body processes necessary for survival, including our heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, and digestion. It also regulates our internal organs such as our stomach, liver, kidneys, bladder, lungs, and salivary glands.

Since our nervous system’s chief function is to help keep us alive, it reacts very quickly to perceived threats or to perceived safety. Our autonomic nervous system has two pathways that activate based on whether our bodies perceive danger (the “fight or flight” response) or safety (the “rest and digest” response). The fight or flight response triggers our sympathetic nervous system, turning off systems of digestion and growth and preparing the body for action and possible injury (by doing things like triggering inflammation, for example). Often the perception of threat or danger by our bodies is not consciously accessible to us (such as when our body detects a bacterial infection). This means that our body may have perceived a threat that we are not yet consciously aware of. Ordinary introspection therefore will not yield a full picture of the state of our nervous system. However, if we pay attention to sensations within the body using interoception (the sensing of things inside the body), this can give us a clue as to what is going on in our nervous system.

In contrast, the rest and digest response triggers our parasympathetic nervous system, relaxing the body and allowing for functions like growth, digestion and so on to resume. This is why when we sense danger and have a fight or flight response, we may notice changes in our heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, pupil dilation and our internal organs. Then when we sense that the danger has passed and we are safe again, we may notice changes in these same organs, for example even noticing noises in the stomach as digestion starts up again.

In modern life, our bodies sometimes react to danger when there is no real threat to our survival, or hold on to a sense of danger after the threat has passed. This leads to a dysregulation of the autonomic nervous system, meaning that its regular alternation between parasympathetic and sympathetic activation is disrupted. This nervous system dysregulation in turns can lead to inflammation, which in turn can even affect the expression of our DNA (by changing a process called methylation), making us more prone to a number of chronic illnesses. This is one of the main reasons why chronic stress is so damaging to our health and well-being. While our bodies are designed to react to short term stressors so that we have the energy to overcome possible dangers, we are not designed to deal with chronic stress, and it takes a significant toll on our mental and physical well-being.

Fortunately, we can learn skills to better regulate our nervous system and enhance our in-born resiliency. Since our nervous system is what senses things both on the inside (such as tension, relaxation, heat, cold, pain, and so on) and on the outside through the five senses, it is giving us constant information about the state of our body. This chapter focuses on the information and skills necessary to further develop this type of self-care.

## Sensations

The first Learning Experience, “Exploring Sensations,” helps students build a vocabulary of sensations as a guide to notice the state of their nervous systems. Sensations (warmth, coldness, heat, tingling, tightness, etc.) are physical, and are to be distinguished from emotions (sad, angry, happy, jealous), which will be explored later in SEE Learning. Although feelings will be explored later, it is important to note that feelings, thoughts, and beliefs have a corresponding sensation or set of sensations within the body. Learning about sensations helps introduce another portal of understanding to ourselves and our students.

## Help Now! Strategies

Learning Experience 1 then moves into Help Now! strategies. These are easy actions that can be practiced to quickly return our bodies and minds to the present moment, and thus function as useful ways to bring our bodies back to a place of balance if we get bumped into our high or low zones (states of hyper-arousal or hypo-arousal). Once the Help Now! Strategies are posted in your classroom, feel free to encourage students to practice them repeatedly.

## Resourcing

Unique to each person, personal resources are internal, external, or imagined things that bring about a greater sense of well-being, safety, or happiness when brought to present moment awareness. When we think of a personal resource (a wonderful memory, a favorite place, a loved one, a joyful activity, a comforting thought), this often brings about pleasant sensations in the body. If we then attend to those sensations consciously and give them a bit of space and time, they can deepen. This increases our nervous system’s sense of safety and brings about an ever greater sense of well-being and relaxation in the body.

## Tracking

Noticing sensations and keeping one’s attention on them is called “tracking.” We “track” or “read” sensations, since sensations are the “language” of the nervous system. This leads to body literacy: our understanding of our own body and how it responds to stress and safety. Although we all share the same basic structure of having a nervous system, our bodies react to stress and safety in slightly different ways. We may become tense in different parts of our body. We may also respond to well-being in different ways. We may experience a pleasant warmth in our chest or an opening and loosening in our facial muscles. Learning to track the sensations of our own body helps us understand when we are feeling relaxed, safe, and happy, or if we are having a stress response. This ability opens up “choice” so when we are distressed, we can choose to bring our awareness to a sensation of well-being or neutrality within the body. This awareness can increase the sense and feeling of well-being.

Note that sensations are not inherently pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral for everyone or at all times: warmth, for example, can be experienced as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral at different times. This is why it’s important to ask whether the sensation is pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.

Since tracking can lead to awareness of unpleasant sensations, which can then be triggering, tracking is always done in conjunction with resourcing, grounding or a Help Now! strategy. The following strategy of “shift and stay” is also important to teach when introducing tracking.

## Shift and Stay

Part of tracking is noticing if the sensation is pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. If we find pleasant or neutral sensations, resting our attention on that part of the body can sometimes allow the sensation to deepen and allow the body to relax and return to the resilient zone. However, if instead we become aware of an unpleasant sensation, we can “shift and stay.” This means to scan our body to find a place that feels better (either neutral or pleasant) and then rest our attention on that new location.

## The Resource Kit and Resource Stone

Learning Experience 3, “Creating a Resource Kit,” builds on previous experiences by helping the students build up a personal “resource kit” of resources that can be called upon whenever necessary. It then reinforces the skills of resourcing and tracking.

## Grounding

Learning Experience 4 “Grounding” introduces the practice of grounding. Grounding is noticing the physical contact our body has with things, including things we touch or how we are standing or sitting. Grounding can be a very helpful tool for calming the body and mind. Typically, we have already unconsciously developed a number of grounding techniques that help us feel relaxed, secure, safe, and better. These may include things like sitting in a certain way, folding our arms in a certain way, holding objects we like, lying a certain way on a couch or in bed, and so on. However, we may not be aware of intentionally using these to calm our bodies and return to our resilient zone. Practicing grounding introduces new techniques and makes conscious ones that we have already developed, thereby making them more accessible when we need them.

## The Resilient Zone

Learning Experience 5, “The Resilient Zone,” introduces the “three zones” as a way of understanding how our body (and specifically our autonomic nervous system) operates. The three zones are the high zone, the low zone, and the resilient zone (or zone of well-being). Understanding this model can be very helpful for both teachers and students.

In this model, we can be in one of three zones. Our resilient zone is our zone of well-being, where we feel calm and alert, and where we feel more in control and better able to make good decisions. Although we can go up and down in this zone and may feel a bit excited or have slightly less energy, our judgment is not impaired and our body is not in a state of harmful stress. Here our autonomic nervous system is in homeostasis, which can be defined as a stable physiological equilibrium. It is able to alternate between sympathetic and parasympathetic activation properly.

Sometimes we get bumped out of our resilient zone by life events. When this happens, our autonomic nervous system becomes dysregulated. If we get stuck in our high zone, we are in a state of hyper-arousal. We may feel anxious, angry, nervous, agitated, afraid, manic, frustrated, “amped up,” or otherwise out of control. Physiologically we may experience shaking, rapid and shallow breathing, headaches, nausea, tightness in our muscles, indigestion, and changes to vision and hearing.

If we get stuck in the low zone, we experience the effects of hypo-arousal. This can have us feeling lethargic, exhausted, lacking in energy, and not wanting to get out of bed or be active. We may feel isolated or lonely, numb, checked out, unmotivated, lacking in optimism, or uninterested in activities that we would normally enjoy. It’s important to note that since the high zone and low zone are both states of dysregulation, they are not opposites of each other: they may share physiological characteristics and when we are dysregulated we may bounce between high and low zones.

In Learning Experience 6, “Exploring the Resilient Zone through Scenarios,” students will learn about these three zones through scenarios and then will give advice to each other on how to return to their resilient zone, based on the skills they have already learned (resourcing, grounding, tracking, and the Help Now! strategies).

Being able to monitor the state of our body is essential to our well-being and happiness because our autonomic nervous system can short-circuit other parts of our brain (harming decision making and bypassing executive function). When we learn to remain in our resilient zone there are many health benefits for our body, including being able to maintain peace of mind and greater control over our behavior and our emotional reactions.

Learning Experience 7, “How Compassion and Safety Affect the Body” connects this chapter back to Chapter 1 and the themes of happiness, kindness, and the class agreements. Now that students know about the important role that their bodies play in their well-being and happiness, they can better understand why it is important to show kindness and consideration to one another. They begin to learn that being mean or inconsiderate of one another leads to stress and our bodies respond to that stress in unpleasant ways, hindering our ability to be happy. Here it can be very helpful to introduce the idea to students that as social beings, our nervous system treats social threats (rejection, isolation, exclusion, etc) just as seriously as physical threats, and responds accordingly with stress. Students can explore the idea that since we are constantly relating to one another and share the same space, we can play a positive role in helping each other remain in our resiliency zones, or return to them if we become out of balance.

In some cases, the activities in this chapter may not instantly yield the results and insights you wish. Don’t be discouraged, as it is often hard even for adults to notice and describe sensations at first. It may take repeating some of the activities a few times before your students are able to describe sensations, notice if they are pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, and use the skills of resourcing and grounding. Even if they do gain insights quickly, repetition is key in order for the skills to become embodied. Eventually, some of the students may begin practicing the skills spontaneously, particularly when facing challenging or stressful circumstances.

Many of these skills were developed through trauma and resiliency work and they are based on a significant body of clinical and scientific research. It is possible that while exploring sensations of the body with your students, some of them will have difficult experiences that you may not be able to deal with sufficiently on your own, especially if they have suffered or are suffering from trauma. Help Now! Strategies can be suggested to the child in the immediate aftermath of an unexpected reaction. If you have counselors or school psychologists, or a wise administrator or colleague, we encourage you to seek assistance and further counsel as necessary. However, the approach taken in SEE Learning is a resiliency-based approach that focuses on the strengths of individual students, not on treating trauma. These are general wellness skills that can be beneficial to anyone, regardless of their level of experience of trauma. Students will be in a good position to explore the next elements of SEE Learning – cultivating attention and developing emotional awareness – when they have more of an ability to regulate their nervous systems.

### **Check-ins and Repeated Practice**

From Chapter 2 onwards, the importance of practice becomes even more important in SEE Learning. You will note that the check-ins for this chapter build, each incorporating skills and material covered in preceding learning experiences. Feel free to select which check-ins work best for your class and then use them on a regular basis even when you are not doing a full session of SEE Learning. Although the learning experiences include “Reflective Practice” sections for developing embodied understanding, the repetition of the check-ins and the repetition of insight activities (with modifications as you see fit) will greatly aid this process of helping students internalize what they are learning to the point where it becomes second-nature.

### **Time and Pacing**

Each learning experience is designed to be a minimum of 30 minutes. It is recommended that you take longer than this if time allows and if your students are capable of it, spending more time on the activities and reflective practices especially. If you have less than 30 minutes, you can choose to only do one of the activities or a part of the activity, and finish the learning experience in the following session. However, remember that Check-ins and Insight Activities are important to include regardless of time.

### **Student Personal Practice**

This is the stage in SEE Learning where it’s important to recognize that your students may be beginning their own personal practice, even in an informal way. As you support them in this, it’s helpful to recognize that each student is different, and that images, sounds, and activities that may be calming for some students can be activating for others. Even things such as the sound of a bell, an image of a cute animal, yoga postures, long moments of silence, or sitting and taking long breaths may be experienced as unpleasant by some of your students and may actually hinder their ability to be calm rather than promote it. You’ll come to know this by watching your students and by asking them what they like, and then by giving them options so that they can develop a personal practice around what works best for them.

### **Teacher Personal Practice**

Naturally, teaching your students these practices will be strengthened by your own familiarity with them. It is recommended that, if possible, you first try these practices on your own and with colleagues, friends, and family as you are able. The more experiential knowledge you have, the easier it will be to do these exercises with your students. All the practices suggested in this chapter can also be done with older children and adults.

### **Further Reading and Resources**

Content for the learning experiences in this chapter has been adapted from the work of Elaine Miller-Karas and the Trauma Resource Institute with their kind permission. Teachers interested in learning more about the content and skills presented in this chapter are encouraged to read the book *Building Resilience to Trauma: The Trauma and Community Resiliency Models* (2015) by Elaine Miller-Karas, and to visit [www.traumaresourceinstitute.com](http://www.traumaresourceinstitute.com)

Also recommended is Bessel van der Kolk's book *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (2015).

## CHAPTER 2

## Building Resiliency

### LEARNING EXPERIENCE

# 1

# Exploring Sensations

### PURPOSE

This first learning experience explores sensations and helps students build a vocabulary to describe them, since sensations tell us most directly about the state of our nervous system. Students will also learn Help Now! strategies, most of which involve sensing things around the room. Help Now! strategies (developed by Elaine Miller-Karas and the Trauma Resource Institute) are immediate tools to help students return to a regulated body state if they are stuck in a dysregulated state, such as being overly agitated. They also are a great way

to introduce the concept of sensations and practice attending to them.

The critical insights aimed at in this learning experience include: just as we can sense things on the outside with our five senses, we can pay attention to sensations inside our bodies also; sensations can be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral; there are simple strategies we can use to help our bodies become calmer and feel safer.

### FRAMEWORK

For more context on the concepts behind this learning experience, please see the Framework, p. 29–31.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

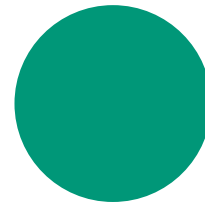
Students will:

- Develop and list vocabulary of words that describe various sensations.
- Practice attending to external sensations while learning Help Now! strategies for regulating the body.

### LENGTH

30 minutes

### PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



*Self-Awareness*  
(1A)

### ENDURING CAPABILITIES

- **1A.1:** Attending to Our Body and Sensations

### MATERIALS REQUIRED

- A piece of chart paper or a board for creating a list of words that describe sensations

# Exploring Sensations

## CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“Welcome. As you think about this whole day until now – from when you first woke up to being in class right now, raise your hand if you can think of something kind that you experienced or did for someone. Would anyone like to share?”*
- *Who has been practicing compassion by using the class agreements? Which agreements have you used? What did that feel like?*
- *Have you seen anyone else practice one of the agreements, in here or elsewhere? Describe it. What did it feel like to see that?*
- *What do you think might happen if we keep practicing compassion with each other?”*

## PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 10 minutes

### What Are Sensations?

#### Overview

In this presentation you will help your students understand what a sensation is and then have them come up with a list of words that describe sensations, thereby building a shared vocabulary of sensation words. A sensation is a physical feeling that arises in the body, such as warm, cold, tingling, loosening, tightening, heaviness, lightness, openness, and so on. Physical sensation words are to be differentiated from general feeling words like good, bad, stressed, relieved, and so on, and they are also different from emotion words like happy, sad, afraid, excited, and so on. Helping your students come up with a list of sensation words will help them recognize sensations in the body, which in turn will help them monitor the state of their bodies.

If you feel comfortable doing so, it is also recommended that you introduce your students

to the role of the **nervous system**: the part of our body that allows us to feel sensations on the inside as well as sense things on the outside (through our five senses, for example) and that keeps us alive by regulating our breathing, our heart rate, blood flow, digestion, and other important functions. This whole chapter involves coming to understand the nervous system (specifically the autonomic nervous system). You can teach the content and skills without naming the nervous system specifically. Instead, use the general term “the body.” If you are able to bring in additional information about the autonomic nervous system gradually, this will likely enrich your students’ overall understanding.

#### Sample script

- *“We’ve been exploring compassion and happiness. Today we’re going to learn about how about how our senses can help us know what our bodies are feeling.*
- *What are the five senses that we have? Who can name one?*
- *These are for feeling things on the outside: we can see, hear, smell, touch, and taste things.*
- *What are things we can sense on the outside through our five senses? Let’s think about one of our senses --hearing -- let’s take a moment of silence and notice what sounds we can hear during a minute of silence. What did you hear? Can anyone share what you are sensing right now using one of the other senses? What about seeing? Touch? Smell?*
- *There is a part of our bodies that help us sense these things on the outside of our bodies and also inside our bodies. Does anyone know what it’s called? You may have heard of it. [Allow students to guess]*



- We call it the nervous system. It is called the nervous system because our body is full of nerves that send information from different parts of our bodies to and from our brain. We're going to be learning some interesting things about our nervous system that can help us be happier and healthier together.
- So, our senses help us feel things on the outside of our bodies like a sound or smell. Let's notice if we can feel anything inside our bodies. If you feel comfortable doing so, put one hand on our heart and the other hand on our belly and let's close our eyes for a moment and notice if we can feel anything inside our body.
- Sometimes we can feel something in our bodies like whether we are feeling hot or cold. Does anyone know what we might call that feeling inside our bodies? [Allow students to guess] Have you ever heard of the word "sensation"? What does it mean?
- We call things like that sensations. That's because we sense them.
- Sensing something is feeling something with our body. Sensations are just things we can feel or sense with our body. Our body tells us what we are sensing.
- Let's think of things we can sense on the outside. We will make a list of sensations together. We can use describing words, like adjectives, to talk about sensations.
  - When you touch your desk, what sensation do you have? Is it hard? Is it soft? Is the temperature warm or cool?
  - If you touch your clothing, what sensation do you have? Is it soft? Scratchy? Smooth? Something else?
  - Take out your pencil/crayon/pen, as you touch it, what sensation do you have? Is it round? Flat? Warm? Cool? Sharp? Something else?
  - Is there something else on your desk/near you that you want to describe with sensation words?
- Now let's think about what we sense on the inside. An example would be if we are standing in the sun, our senses may let us know it is too hot, and we take action to move into the shade to cool down. In the beginning, we sense the warmth or the heat on the inside and when we move to the shade, we sense a cooling down on the inside. Let's think together about other sensations we experience on the inside.
- Let's see how many we can come up with. If you say something but we're maybe not sure if it's a sensation, I'm going to write it separately over here."
- (Some students may need further prompting to understand sensations. Hence asking questions like the following may help:) What do you feel on the inside when you're sleepy? What part of your body tells you that you are sleepy? How about when you're hungry? What do you feel like when you are having fun? What do you feel on the inside when you're happy? If you play a sport, what do you feel like on the inside? What do you feel on the inside when you're excited? Where in your body do you feel that? (It may be helpful if you give a personal example, such as when I'm thinking about having fun, I sense warmth in my shoulders and cheeks.)

Make a list of sensation words with the students. If they say things like "I feel good!" which is a feeling but not a specific sensation, then encourage them to put that into sensation words by asking, "And what does good feel like in the body?" or "Where in the body do you sense that?" It is all

# Exploring Sensations

right if some of the words they come up with are not precisely sensation words, as the activities that follow will help them further develop their understanding of what a sensation is.

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## INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 12 minutes Sensing on the Outside and Inside\*

### Overview

This activity is to help students continue to recognize that we can sense things on the outside (using our five senses) and on the inside (turning our awareness inside, noticing and naming what sensations we find inside the body). The Community Resiliency Model, designed by the Trauma Resource Institute, provides several activities called “Help Now!” strategies. These all involve doing an easy cognitive task or directing our attention to sensations. It has been found that when the nervous system is agitated, directing attention to sensations by doing activities like these can have an immediate calming effect on the body. This insight activity works through the individual Help Now! strategies and also lays the foundation for cultivating attention as a skill (which is further developed later in SEE Learning), since all the Help Now! strategies involve paying attention.

As students explore the effects of these strategies on their bodies, it is important that they also learn to notice whether the sensations they experience are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. As this vocabulary (pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral) and the ability to connect these terms to sensations in the body will be important for all learning experiences in this chapter, it is worth checking in occasionally with your students to deepen their understanding of noticing sensations in this three-fold way. Note that sensations are not inherently pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral for

everyone or at all times: warmth, for example, can be experienced as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral at different times.

Help Now! strategies can be used to help the body return to its resilient zone (a topic explored later in this chapter). The asterisk denotes that this activity is one that you may wish to practice multiple times in order to build activities and also gradually work your way through the various Help Now! strategies.

Note that not every Help Now! strategy will work for every student. Some may prefer to push against a wall, some may prefer to lean against a wall. Some may like touching pieces of furniture around them, some may not. An important part of the process here is for each student to learn what works for himself or herself, while you as the teacher also learn what works for each individual student. This is the building of body literacy—a knowledge of one’s own body and how it experiences well-being and distress. Even something that works one time may not be effective another time, so learning a variety of strategies is best.

Here is a list of the Help Now! strategies and below is a sample script of how you can lead the activity to explore a few of them at a time.

- Notice sounds in the room, and then outside of the room.
- Name the colors in the room.
- Touch a piece of furniture near you. Notice its temperature and texture (is it hot, cold, or warm; is it smooth, rough, or something else?).
- Push against a wall with your hands or your back and notice how your muscles feel.
- Count backwards from 10.

### Sample script

- *“Remember we said we want to feel happy and we want to experience kindness.*
- *Our bodies can feel happy or unhappy too. What do you think that means? (Call on individual students to share ideas).*
- *If we pay attention to our bodies, we can do things that feel kind to our bodies.*
- *We’re going to try a few sensing activities and see if we notice anything happening to our bodies.*
- *We’ll start with sensing things on the outside.*
- *Let’s all listen and see if we can hear three things inside this room. Listen and then raise your hand when you have three things that you heard inside this room. (Wait until all or most of the students have raised their hand.)*
- *Let’s share now. What three things did you notice? (Call on individual students to share).*
- *Now let’s see if we can hear three things outside of this room. Raise your hand when you’ve got three things that you heard outside this room. (Note: This exercise can also be accomplished with music. You can play music and ask the students what happens on the inside as they listen to music.)*
- *(When most or all students have raised their hands, allow them to share.)*
- *What happened to our bodies when we all listened for sounds inside and outside the room? What did you notice? (Allow for sharing. You may notice that when you are all listening for sounds, you become quieter and more still.)*
- *Now we’re going to notice what happens inside our bodies when we do this.*
- *Our sensations can be pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. There are no right or wrong sensations. Sensations exist to give us information like I am too hot in the sun, I need to walk to that shade to cool down. Let’s review these words: What does pleasant mean? How about unpleasant? What about neutral? (Call on individual students to share).*
- *Neutral means in-between. It means that the sensation isn’t pleasant, but it isn’t unpleasant either.*
- *Let’s listen for things inside or outside this classroom that we didn’t notice before. [Pause.]*
- *When we’re doing this, what do you notice on the inside of your body as you’re listening? Do you notice any sensations inside your body right now? Raise your hand if you notice a sensation inside your body.*
- *What do you notice? Where is it? Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral? [Allow other students to share.]*
- *Now let’s see if we can find things of a certain color in the room. Let’s start with red.*
- *Look around the room and see if you can find three red things in this room.*
- *Notice what you’re feeling on the inside as you find the color red. Does anyone notice any sensations in their bodies? Raise your hand if you noticed one.*
- *What is it? Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?”*

Use this format to explore the various Help Now! strategies as you have time, and repeat this activity as necessary.

# Exploring Sensations

You can also have students explore the Help Now! strategies as stations around the room. Use the handouts provided in the following section or make your own and post them around the room. Have your students pair up and then walk around the room until they find a Help Now! station that they want to try. Then they can do the Help Now! skill together as a pair and share what they experience. After everyone has had a chance to try

two or more stations, bring them back together as a class and ask them to share which stations they did and what they experienced.

Once your students have had some familiarity practicing Help Now! strategies, you can also have them illustrate their own Help Now! stations and place them around the room.

Strategy	What Sensations Do You Notice in Your Body?	Are the Sensations Pleasant, Unpleasant, or Neutral?
Name six colors you notice in the room.		
Count backwards from 10.		
Notice different 3 sounds in the room and 3 outside of the room.		
Slowly drink a glass of water. Feel it in your mouth and throat.		
Spend a minute walking around the room. Notice the feeling of your feet on the ground.		
Press your palms together firmly or rub your palms together until they get warm.		
Touch a piece of furniture or a surface near you. Notice its temperature and texture.		
Slowly push against a wall with your hands or your back and notice any feelings in your muscles.		
Look around the room and notice what catches your attention.		

**DEBRIEF** | 4 minutes

- *“What are some things you learned today about sensations?”*
- *What are some words that describe sensations?*
- *How can knowing a little more about the idea of sensations help us be happier and kinder? When do you think it might be useful to use one of these Help Now! activities?*
- *Let’s remember what we’ve learned and see if we can use it together next time.”*

Help Now! Strategy

# Station 1



**Slowly drink a glass of water.  
Feel it in your mouth and throat.**

**What do you notice on the inside?  
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?**

Help Now! Strategy

## Station 2



**Name six colors you see.**

**What do you notice on the inside?  
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?**

Help Now! Strategy

## Station 3



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**Look around the room and notice what catches your attention.**

**What do you notice on the inside?  
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?**



Help Now! Strategy

## Station 4



**Count backwards from 10 as you walk around the room.**

**What do you notice on the inside?  
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?**

Help Now! Strategy

## Station 5



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**Touch a piece of furniture or a surface near you. Notice its temperature and texture.**

**What do you notice on the inside?  
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?**

Help Now! Strategy

## Station 6



**Press your palms together firmly or rub your palms together until they get warm.**

**What do you notice on the inside?  
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?**

Help Now! Strategy

## Station 7



**Notice the 3 sounds within the room  
and 3 sounds outside.**

**What do you notice on the inside?  
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?**

## Station 8



**Walk around the room.  
Notice the feeling of your feet on the ground.**

**What do you notice on the inside?  
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?**

Help Now! Strategy

## Station 9



**Slowly push your hands or back  
against a wall or door.**

**What do you notice on the inside?  
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?**

## CHAPTER 2

## Building Resiliency

### LEARNING EXPERIENCE

# 2

# Resourcing

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this learning experience is to help students explore the use of a personal resource (in this case, the compassion drawings created in Chapter 1) to bring about greater well-being in the body. Personal resources are internal, external, or imagined things that serve to bring about sensations of greater well-being in the body. They are unique to each person.

When we notice these sensations (tracking) and then focus upon pleasant or neutral sensations, the body tends to relax and return to its resiliency zone (which students will learn about later). Both resourcing and tracking are skills that develop over time and lead to what can be called *body literacy*, since we are learning about our own bodies and how they respond to stress and well-being.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Discover how to use a personal resource to relax and calm the body.
- Develop greater skill in identifying and tracking sensations in the body.

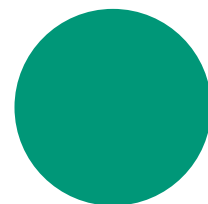
### FRAMEWORK

For more context on the concepts behind this learning experience, please see the Framework, p. 40–42.

### MATERIALS REQUIRED

- The drawings of compassion that students created in Chapter 1. If you do not have those drawings, you can have them create new ones, but this will take additional time.
- The following questions written on the board or chart paper:
  - *What do you notice on the inside right now as you remember that moment of compassion?*
  - *Are there any sensations you notice in your body?*
  - *Is that sensation you just told me about pleasant, unpleasant, or in between?*
  - *What other sensations do you notice in your body as you remember the moment of compassion?*
  - *Would anyone like to share?*

### PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Self-Regulation  
(1E)

### ENDURING CAPABILITIES

- **1A.1:** Attending to Our Body and Sensations
- **1E.1:** Balancing the Body

### LENGTH

30 minutes

# Resourcing

**CHECK-IN** | 4 minutes

- “Let’s practice some of the Help Now! activities that we learned last time. (You may wish to have pictures of the Help Now! activities up to allow students to pick one of them.) I’ll talk us through the exercises and then you can share out loud at the end.
- Let’s listen and see if we can hear three things inside this room.
- Now let’s listen and see if we can hear three things outside this room.
- What’s one thing you hear? What do we notice on the inside as we do that? Do you notice a pleasant or neutral sensation? Remember, neutral means in-between.
- Look around the room, and see what catches your attention that is pleasant or neutral, it could be an object, a color, a favorite friend, or something else.
- Now let’s check in with our bodies as something catches our attention. What do you notice on the inside? Can you find a pleasant or neutral sensation in your body?
- Is there anyone that can’t find a pleasant or neutral sensation? If so, raise your hand. (If some students raise their hands, help them shift to a place in their body that feels better.)
- Once you’ve found a pleasant or neutral sensation, let’s just pay attention to that place quietly for a moment. See if the sensation changes or if it stays the same.
- How was that? What can you share with the group? (Allow students to share.)”

**INSIGHT ACTIVITY** | 20 minutes**Using the compassion Drawing as a Personal Resource****Overview**

Students will share their drawing and then notice sensations in their body, paying particular attention to pleasant and neutral sensations. Bringing to mind something that evokes greater well-being, safety, or security is called “resourcing.” The object that one brings to mind is called a personal resource. Noticing the sensations that arise is called “tracking” the sensations or “reading” them (you can use whichever term you prefer). When a pleasant or neutral sensation is found through tracking, we can keep our attention on that sensation for several moments and observe the sensation, seeing if it stays the same or changes. This tends to deepen the sensation and lead to greater relaxation in the body.

Although we all have nervous systems, there can be great variety in terms of what functions as a personal resource for us and what sensations arise in us related to well-being or stress. If tracking leads us to noticing unpleasant sensations, we can try to find a place in the body that feels better, and focus on that instead. This is called “shift and stay.” When we do find a pleasant or neutral sensation in the body through tracking, we can keep our attention on it for a few moments. As noted, this silent attention tends to deepen the experience and signals to the body that we are safe, and the body typically responds with relaxation.

The critical insights aimed at in this activity are as follows: sensations can be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral; the same sensation (such as warmth) could be any of these three; when we focus on pleasant or neutral sensations, our bodies tend to relax; we can use resources and attention to sensations to relax our bodies.



### Sample script

- *“We’re going to explore how looking at or thinking about something we like can lead to sensations in the body.*
- *Does anyone remember what we call the part of our body that senses things and sends information to our brain? That’s right – the nervous system. We’re going to learn more about that now.*
- *Let’s review – we said that sensations can be described in three ways – what were they?*
- *What does neutral mean?*
- *That’s right: in between.*
- *What sensations do you think could be pleasant or unpleasant or in-between?*
- *How about warmth? What’s it like when it’s pleasant? Unpleasant? In-between?*
- *Or coolness?*
- *Or having lots of energy and movement inside our bodies? What’s it like when we have that and it’s pleasant? Have you ever felt that but it was unpleasant? Could it be in-between and neutral?*
- *Now let’s take out our compassion drawing that we made.*
- *Take a moment to look at your compassion drawing. Remember what it was about.*
- *If you like, see what catches your eye on your drawing, and touch the part that catches your eye. Notice what happens on the inside.*
- *Are the sensations pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral? Is there a difference between looking and touching your compassion drawing?*

- *Turn to a partner on your left or right and share your drawing and the sensations you had. Then we’ll come back together as a group to discuss.*
- *Who would like to share their compassion drawing with the rest of us?*
- *It’s important that when one of us shares, everyone else is going to listen and watch quietly.”* (Reference the relevant group agreement here.)

As a large group, allow one person at a time to share. After the person has shared, ask them immediately (waiting too long will allow the sensations to pass):

- *“What do you notice on the inside right now as you remember that moment of compassion?*
- *Are there any sensations you notice in your body?*
- *Is that sensation you just told me about pleasant, unpleasant, or in between?*
- *What other sensations do you notice in your body as you remember the moment of compassion?*
- *Would anyone like to share?”*

As an option, you can allow them to share other things that make them feel happy, safe, or good, besides their compassion drawing.

- *“If you’d rather choose something else to think of instead of your compassion drawing, you can think of a person, place, an animal, a thing, or memory that makes you feel good and share that.”*

It’s possible that the student will share sensations that are coming from things other than the compassion drawing. For example, the student may feel nervous speaking up and may describe

# Resourcing

sensations related to that. If that happens, you can redirect the student back to the compassion drawing and see if that evokes any pleasant or neutral sensations. If the student does report a pleasant sensation, then ask them to pause for a moment and just notice that sensation. It is this pausing and staying aware of the pleasant or neutral sensation that allows the body to relax and deepen into an experience of safety. If the student reports unpleasant sensations, ask if there is somewhere else in the body that feels better, then allow them to pause and notice that place that feels better.

Allow a few students to share and go through the same process with each one. It's possible that as one student shares and experiences pleasant sensations, there may be noticeable changes in their body associated with relaxation. Other students may notice this. If they do, allow them to share what physical changes they noticed.

Note: A single sensation (like warmth, for example) can be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. Coolness similarly can be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, so it is helpful to ask the students specifically whether the sensation is pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral so that they begin to learn the skill of tracking in this way. Also note that the nervous system responds to stimuli very quickly. If you wait too long when the student sharing their compassion drawing, their attention will have moved on to something else, and they will no longer be experiencing sensations related to recalling a moment of compassion. The timing of this will become more apparent to you with practice.

## DEBRIEF | 5 minutes

- *"What did we discover about personal resources and sensations?"*
- *What kinds of sensations came when we looked at our personal resources?*
- *Where in our bodies did we feel those sensations?*
- *Do you think we could come up with more personal resources in the future?*
- *If you ever feel unpleasant, do you think you could use one of your personal resources to help your body feel better?"*

# Creating a Resource Kit

## PURPOSE

This learning experience builds on the last activity by helping students create a “resource kit” (or “tool kit” or “treasure chest” as elementary students may call it) of personal resources. Personal resources are internal, external, or imagined things that serve to bring about sensations of greater well-being in the body. They are unique to each person. Thinking about a personal resource tends to bring sensations of well-being to the body. It is good to have more than one resource, because a particular resource might not work all the time. For example, some resources might serve to energize us when we

are feeling down, while others might calm us when we’re feeling hyperactive. It is important to practice resourcing along with tracking, since it is the tracking skill that builds body literacy.

The critical insights aimed at in this learning experience include: we can develop and use a variety of resources to help the body feel calmer and safer; our nervous systems respond when we think of things we like and enjoy or things that make us feel safer; some resources may work better at certain times than others; resourcing can become easier with practice.

## FRAMEWORK

For more context on the concepts behind this learning experience, please see the Framework, p. 40–42.

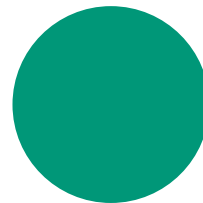
## MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Colored or white blank 4"x6" cards (or paper cut to a similar size) and colored pens or markers for each student
- A small box, pouch, or a large colored envelope to serve as the “resource kit” for each student to store their drawings of personal resources in
- A box of small colored rocks, stones, crystals or other similar objects (optional)
- Art supplies for decorating the resource kit (optional)
- The compassion drawings from Chapter 1

## LENGTH

30 minutes (40 with optional activity)

## PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Self-Regulation  
(1E)

## ENDURING CAPABILITIES

- **1A.1:** Attending to Our Body and Sensations
- **1E.1:** Balancing the Body

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Create a resource kit of personal resources that they can use to calm themselves when stressed.
- Discover how to use their personal resources to relax and calm the body.
- Develop greater skill in identifying and tracking sensations in the body.

# Creating a Resource Kit

## CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

Distribute the compassion drawings from the previous learning experience to each student.

- *“Let’s take a moment to get comfortable as we take out the compassion drawings we did last time. I’ll talk us through the exercise and then you can share out loud at the end.*
- *Look around the room, and see what catches your attention that is pleasant or neutral, it could be an object, a color, a favorite friend, or something else.*
- *Bring your attention to a place on the inside that feels pleasant or neutral.*
- *Now let’s think of our moment of compassion or the drawing of a resource. (Pause.) Take a look at your drawing and see if you can remember what the moment of compassion or resource was that you drew, where you were, or who you were with.*
- *When you think about this moment of compassion or resource, what do you notice happening the inside your body? (If students share pleasant or neutral sensations, allow them to sit with their attention on those sensations. If they share unpleasant sensations, encourage them to shift and stay, or to choose one of the Help Now! activities.*
- *As we do this, we’re learning about our bodies and how to calm them and make them feel okay.*
  - *How was that? What can you share with the group?” (Allow students to share.)*

## INSIGHT ACTIVITY #1 | 15 minutes

### Creating a Resource Kit\*

#### Overview

In this activity students will come to understand what a personal resource is: something specific to them that makes them feel good or better when they think of it. They will then create a set of personal resources for themselves, drawing each one on a piece of paper and then labeling it. The pieces of paper can be smaller than full-size US Letter or A4 pages so that they can be folded and placed in a box (or colored envelope) which will serve as a kit of the student’s personal resources. If you or your students prefer, you can call this a “tool kit,” “treasure chest,” “treasure pouch,” “pouch of resources,” “tool box,” or some other name that you and your students come up with. At the end of this learning experience, each student will have a resource kit with a few personal resources. As the year goes on, they can add to their resource kit and they can pull resources from it when they need to.

The critical insight aimed at here is students identifying what serves as a personal resource for them; that is, recognizing the value of something in their life as a resource that makes them feel good or better. Although we all have things in our lives (people, places, activities, memories, hopes, etc.) that make us feel better, we sometimes take them for granted or don’t recognize them as having this special value.

Note: Personal resources can be quite simple; they do not have to be something incredibly wonderful. Personal resources are also unique to the individual; what works for one person will often not work for someone else. To keep the range as broad as possible at first, use a variety of words to describe what a personal resource can be rather than a single word like “happiness,” “safety,”

“joy,” etc. That will make it easier for your students to find something that works for them.

### Sample script

- *“Today we’re going to create a resource kit. It’s like a tool kit.*
- *What’s a tool kit for? What kind of things do you find in a tool kit?*
- *In this kit we’re going to put reminders of our personal resources: things that make us feel better, things that make us feel safer, or things we like.*
- *We call these things personal resources. A resource means something that is useful, just like a tool. It’s personal because our resource is something special to us. It doesn’t have to be special to other people.*
- *Personal resources are things that make us feel better, happier, or safer.*
- *They can be things we like to do. They can be things we find relaxing or fun. They can be people we like. They can even be things about ourselves – things we’re proud of or happy about.*
- *Is there someone you like who makes you feel safer and happier when you think of them?*
- *Is there a place you like that makes you feel better when you go there or think about it?*
- *Is there something you really like to do that is fun?*
- *These are all personal resources. It can be anything that makes you feel good or makes you feel better when you’re not feeling good.*

- *It can even be something that you imagine that makes you feel better or happier when you think of it.*
- *Let’s take a moment to think of a personal resource for ourselves; maybe you can think of more than one.*
- *Now let’s take a moment to draw our resource or resources. Remember, this is not a drawing competition and we’re not going to judge each others’ ability to draw. It’s just to help you remember that moment.*
- *Let’s write down the name of our resource on the drawing so we can remember what we drew later.”*

Allow the students time to draw resources. When they have drawn or selected a few resources each, allow them to share with each other in pairs or with the class as a whole.

- *“Now we’ve created a few personal resources. Each one is like a treasure. It’s valuable. Each one is also like a tool – it’s useful. We can save it for later, and we can use it when we want to.*
- *We can keep our resources in our resource kits. Let’s write our names on our resource kits.*
- *Turn to a partner on your left or right and share one of your resources. Then we’ll come back together as a group to discuss.*
- *Let’s share what we made with each other. Who would like to share one of your resources and why it is a resource for you?*
- *It’s important that when one of us shares, everyone else is going to listen and watch quietly.”* (Reference the relevant group agreement here.)

# Creating a Resource Kit

You may wish to repeat this activity to create more resources. Also, you can set aside time for your students to decorate and personalize their resource kit thereby making it individualized. In this way, their resource kit itself may come to serve as a resource for them. You can also use the following supplemental insight activity (“resource stone”) to add to the resource kit.

## INSIGHT ACTIVITY #2 | 10 minutes Resource Stone (Optional)

### Overview

This is an optional supplemental insight activity that can go along with the resource kit activity. You may not have time to do both activities in one lesson, so you can always do this later. In this activity, you invite the students to form a circle and choose a small stone, crystal, or other object from a bag or box. They then think of something they are thankful for, and the stone or object comes to represent that thing. They then add the object to their resource kit.

### Leading the Activity

Invite the students to join you in a circle. Give each student a small crystal, stone, or other small item or invite them to choose one they like from a box or bag. They should choose.

- *“This is a special treasure for your tool kit.*
- *It is a stone (or crystal) that can help remind you how to feel calm, safe, and peaceful. We’ll call it a resource stone, since we will use it to remind us of a resource.*
- *But, before it can do that, we have to practice something new.*
- *Take a moment and think of something that you are thankful for.*

- *It can be one of your personal resources or something new.*
- *We can feel thankful for little things, like a someone giving you a smile, or big things like special people in our lives.*
- *Let’s all take a moment and think about something we feel thankful for: a place, a person, an object, or something else.*
- *It could be an adult in your life, a pet, a favorite park. Whatever it is, take a moment to picture it in your mind.*
- *As you think about this special thing, give your stone a gentle squeeze. You can rub it with your fingers too.*
- *Notice what sensations you feel on the inside as you hold your stone and think of what you’re thankful for.*
- *Now, we’ll go around the circle and share what we’re thankful for. It’s ok to pass.*
- *I’ll start: “I’m thankful for... (the trees that I see outside, my walk home, my good friends, my cat).”*

Go around the circle until everyone has shared.

- *“Notice how you feel on the inside now that we’ve all expressed thanks for something special to us.*
- *Does anyone notice any sensations on the inside? What do you notice?*
- *Now you can return to your desks (tables) and place your special stone inside your resource kit.*
- *We can write a note and put it in our resource kit also, so that we remember what it is we were thankful for.”*



## REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 7 minutes

### Practicing Resourcing and Tracking\*

#### Overview

In this reflective practice, students will choose one of their personal resources and sit with it for a moment, seeing if they can notice sensations in the body and identify them as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral (in-between).

#### Sample script

- *“Now we’re going to notice sensations in our bodies. (Review what a sensation is with examples if necessary).*
- *Let’s take a moment and choose one of your favorite resources.*
- *Make yourself comfortable and place the drawing of your resource in front of you.*
- *If you feel that you are distracted, move to a place where you are less distracted.*
- *Let’s take a moment and be still and just look at our resource and think about it.*
- *What does it feel like on the inside when we look at and think about our resource?*
- *Do you notice any pleasant sensations? If you don’t, that’s okay.*
- *If you notice unpleasant sensations, then just shift and find another part of your body that feels better. Stay with the place that feels better.*
- *Once we’ve found a pleasant sensation, or just an in-between sensation, then we can stay there and just feel that sensation. (Pause.)*
- *It’s like we’re reading our body and its sensations. We call this tracking. Tracking means to follow something closely. When we notice the sensations in the body and pay attention to them, we are tracking.*

- *Would anyone like to share a sensation that they notice in their body?*
- *What does it feel like when you just pay attention to that sensation?”*

Note that if students share unpleasant sensations, remind them that they can shift to a place in their body that feels better or even just neutral. This skill is called “shift and stay.” Also, remember that you are helping them to learn what a sensation is, so if they say things like “It feels good” or “It feels bad,” ask them things like, “What does good feel like? Can you describe the sensation?” You can use the sensation word list that you created with them in the previous learning experience.

Resourcing is a skill that will take time to develop. It is suggested that you repeat this activity a few times until students gain some direct experience with pleasant sensations in the body while thinking of their personal resource. After such critical insight is born, further practice will then lead to an embodied understanding of the way their own nervous system experiences and expresses stress and well-being.

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## DEBRIEF | 4 minutes

- *These resource kits are for you to use to help you whenever you need to feel more safe, calm, and peaceful.*
- *Whenever you feel you need some help feeling calmer, you can take a few moments and touch your stone quietly, and remember something you’re thankful for. Or look at your pictures of your resources.*
- *What kinds of sensations came when we looked at our personal resources?*

## Creating a Resource Kit

- *Do you think we could come up with more personal resources in the future?*
- *When might you want to use your resource kit?*



## CHAPTER 2

## Building Resiliency

### LEARNING EXPERIENCE

# 4

# Grounding

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this learning experience is to explore the skill of grounding as a way of returning to and staying within the resiliency zone/OK zone. Grounding refers to attending to the physical contact of one's body with an object. Grounding is always practiced with tracking (attending to sensations in the body), as these two together build body literacy. As there are many ways to do grounding, and each student will likely find methods that work best for him or her, it is recommended that you repeat some of the activities in this learning experience a few times.

The critical insights aimed at in this learning experience are: our nervous system responds to the physical contact of our bodies with objects and surfaces; attention to pleasant or neutral sensations in the body when grounding can lead to relaxation; we each have specific grounding techniques that will work best for us; practicing grounding can make it easier and more effective over time.

### FRAMEWORK

For more context on the concepts behind this learning experience, please see the Framework, p. 40–42.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

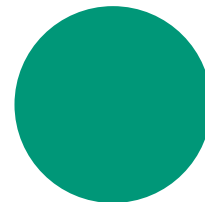
Students will:

- Increase awareness of how our bodies feel when we move them in certain ways.
- Gain proficiency in the practice of grounding through various postures.
- Gain proficiency in the practice of grounding through holding an object.

### MATERIALS REQUIRED

- A grab bag of objects for students to hold such as stuffed animals/soft toys, articles of clothing, pendants, watches, toys (If you prefer, or if it is difficult to arrange these items, you can ask students beforehand to bring something that they feel they might enjoy using for this activity)

### PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Self-Regulation  
(1E)

### ENDURING CAPABILITIES

- **1A.1:** Attending to Our Body and Sensations
- **1E.1:** Balancing the Body

### LENGTH

30 minutes

# Grounding

## CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“Let’s take out our tool kits and see if there’s something in there we’d like to use. I’ll talk us through the exercise and then you can share out loud at the end.*
- *Pick one of your personal resources and hold it in your hands or place it in front of you.*
- *Let your eyes rest on it, or close your eyes and feel it carefully with your hands.*
- *Let’s take a few moments to really give our attention to our drawing or objects. (Pause) As you do that, try to notice the sensations inside your body. You might feel warmer or cooler, lighter or heavier, perhaps tingling, maybe you notice your breathing, just be curious. If you don’t notice any sensations, that’s okay and just notice that you’re not feeling any sensations at the moment. You can still just sit and enjoy your object. [Pause for several seconds – however much time you feel your group is ready for.]*
- *How was that? What can you share with the group?”* (Allow students to share.)

## INSIGHT ACTIVITY #1 | 12 minutes

### Grounding with One’s Stance\*

#### Overview

In this activity students will practice the skill of grounding by trying out different stances and seeing which ones bring about the greatest sense of well-being in their bodies. You may need to prepare the space first to allow for students to push down on a desk as well as push and lean against a wall. Explain that you will be learning a skill called “grounding” which is to help the body feel better, safer, more secure, and more stable. In that sense it is quite like resourcing, but instead of thinking of a resource, it involves moving your

body until it is most comfortable. Because our nervous systems constantly monitor the posture of our bodies and the contact of our bodies with objects (including what is supporting us, such as the floor, beds, or chairs), simply changing our stance can help the nervous system regulate itself better.

Lead your students through different postures (standing, sitting, pushing down on their desk, leaning against the wall, pushing against the wall), pausing briefly during each posture to allow them to track their sensations, and then allowing them to share what sensations (if any) they notice. Tracking allows a deepening of the experience and the building of body literacy. Conclude by allowing them to practice the stance or posture that they like best, and note that they can use stances and postures like this when they need to calm down or help their bodies feel better.

#### Sample script

- *“We can use the sense of touch to practice a skill called “grounding.”*
- *We are going to try a little experiment and see if we feel differently depending on what our body is doing.*
- *Who remembers what a sensation is?*
- *That’s right – Sensations are just things we can feel or sense with our body.*
- *Since we’re all sitting now, let’s notice the sensations in our bodies that come from sitting. Feel free to change your way of sitting to one that is most comfortable for you. Now let’s track our sensations by paying attention to them. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s all stand. Stand in the way that is most comfortable for you.*

- *Let's track what sensations we notice in our body now that we're standing. Let's see what we're feeling on the inside.*[Pause.]
- *Who would like to share?* [Allow for student comments on what they are sensing.]
- *Raise your hand if you feel better standing. Raise your hand if you felt better sitting.*
- *That's interesting, isn't it? Tracking helps us know which feels better for us. It is different for each of us.*
- *What we're doing is called "grounding."*
- *We use grounding to help our bodies feel more safe, strong, secure, or happy.*
- *That's because our nervous system always pays attention to the position of our bodies and what we're touching. It senses what position we are in and it responds to that. It can feel better or not so good depending on how we're standing or what we're touching.*
- *Now that we are paying attention to sensations, we can see if the way we hold our body changes those sensations.*
- *Sometimes by changing the way we are standing or sitting can help us feel better.*
- *Let's try something different. Let's push down on the table with our hands. It doesn't have to be too hard. And let's track what sensations we feel on the inside.* [Pause.] *(If students are sitting in a circle away from tables, they can place their hands on the bench or floor and push hard to lift themselves up off their seat, feeling the contact and also the pressure in their arms.)*
- *What sensations do you notice on the inside?* [Allow students to share.]
- *Let's try a different thing. Let's push against the wall with our hands. While we're doing that, let's do tracking. Let's notice what sensations are in our body when we push like this and where in our body we feel those sensations.* [Pause.]
- *What sensations are you noticing?* [Allow students to share.] *Are they pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?*
- *Let's try leaning against the walls with our backs. And let's track while we do this, paying attention to our sensations on the inside.* [Pause.]
- *What sensations are you noticing now?* [Allow students to share.] *Are they pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?*
- *Raise your hand if you felt better pushing against the wall. Raise your hand if you feel better leaning against the wall. Raise your hand if you felt better pushing down on the table or seat.*
- *Now let's each do what we prefer. If you want to sit, do that. Or you can stand, you can push down on the table, you can lean against the wall, or you can push against the wall. Let's all do the one we like best.*
- *Now let's pay attention to the sensations inside our body by tracking. You might like to close your eyes to help you feel the sensations.*
- *What do you notice? Do we all like the same things?*
- *Did you find one that made you feel better?*
- *When we do this, we learn what feels best for us. We can use this practice of grounding to help our body be calmer if it isn't feeling calm."*

# Grounding

If you like you can add other postures as well, even including lying down or sitting with one's back against the wall. Arm positions can also be used, such as folding one's arms. Remember to encourage them to use tracking to notice the sensations in their bodies, as this will help them see which postures are most helpful.

## INSIGHT ACTIVITY #2 | 10 minutes Grounding with an Object\*

### Overview

Grounding is the physical contact of our body with an object or surface. This can include the ground, a chair, or the wall, as in the previous activity. But it can also involve holding an object. When we enjoy the sensations that arise from holding an object, attention to those sensations can also help us relax. In this activity, you will allow your students to choose an object they like from a selection that you provide (or ask them to bring objects of their own) and they will practice holding a few of the objects and noticing what sensations arise in their bodies when they do this. You may wish to have a variety of soft objects or objects with nice textures as well as some hard objects like wooden objects or stones. Students can also use their resource stone from the previous learning experience. If you will not have enough objects for them, you can ask them to bring in something from home prior to doing this activity.

### Sample script

- *"We can do grounding by holding or touching things also.*
- *Here are some things we can use to practice grounding. You can each choose something you think you might enjoy holding.*
- *Let's sit and hold our object. You can feel it with your hands or place it on your lap.*

- *Notice how it feels.*
- *Who can describe their object using sensation words? What does it feel like?*
- *Now let's do tracking. We're going to pay attention to the sensations in our body as we hold our object.*
- *Let's be silent for a moment and notice any sensations in our body as we hold our object.* [Pause.]
- *What did you notice? Where did you notice it in the body?*
- *Let's be silent again and do some more tracking.* [Pause.]
- *What did you notice this time?*
- *Would anyone like to change their object?* [Repeat once allowing students to pick a different object if they didn't particularly like their first one.]
- *This is also grounding."*

After you do this a few times, you may find that some students like particular objects especially and can use them for grounding. If this is the case, you may wish to leave some of these objects in the classroom to allow students to use them for grounding when they feel the need to as suits your classroom.

## INSIGHT ACTIVITY #3 | 10 minutes Grounding with a Part of the Body\*

### Overview

This activity is an extension of further ways students can use grounding, in this case by becoming aware of their feet and hands while lightly pressing down on a table, leaning against

the wall, sitting, or standing. As in other grounding activities, what is important is to combine grounding with tracking (awareness of sensations in the body).

### Sample script

- *“We can do grounding by becoming aware of a part of our body in relationship to a surface.*
  - *Let’s try placing our hand(s) against a table, a wall or the floor.*
  - *Let’s try paying attention to our feet and how they are positioned on the ground.*
  - *Now let’s do tracking. We are going to pay attention to the sensations in our body.*
  - *Feel free to move or shift at any time to make yourself more comfortable.*
  - *Let’s be silent for a moment and notice any sensations in our body. [Pause.]*
  - *What did you notice? Where do you notice it in the body?*
  - *Let’s be silent again and do some more tracking. [Pause.]*
  - *What did you notice this time?*
  - *Did you like paying attention to your hands, your feet or both?*
  - *This is also grounding.”*
- 

### DEBRIEF | 4 minutes

- *“What did we discover about grounding?*
- *Does anyone remember a sensation that they felt or heard someone else share?*
- *When do you think you could use grounding?”*

## CHAPTER 2

## Building Resiliency

### LEARNING EXPERIENCE

# 5

# The Resilient Zone

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this learning experience is to introduce students to the concept of the resilient zone, which you can also call the “OK zone” or “zone of well-being,” using stories and charts. The resilient zone refers to when our mind and body are in a state of well-being. When we are in our resilient zone we can handle the stresses that happen during the day and react with the best part of ourselves. Stress can bump us out of our resilient zone into our high or low zone. When we are stuck in the high zone we may feel anxious, agitated, nervous, angry, stressed out, and so on. Our body is dysregulated, making it hard for us to concentrate, learn new information, or make good decisions. When we are stuck in the low zone, we may feel tired, lacking in energy, unexcited

about things we normally like, unmotivated, and deflated.

The critical insights aimed at here are: stressors can knock us out of our resilient zone; all people experience being stuck in the high zone or stuck in the low zone; when we are stuck in one of those two zones, we tend not to make the best decisions and we don’t feel good; there are specific practices we can do to return to the resilient zone; once in the resilient zone, we experience more well-being, our bodies are healthier, we are kinder to ourselves and others, and we make better decisions. Don’t be concerned if your students do not reach these critical insights right away, as they are reinforced in the following two learning experiences also.

### FRAMEWORK

For more context on the concepts behind this learning experience, please see the Framework, p. 29–31.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

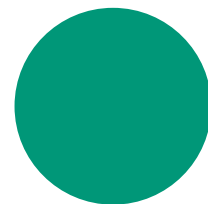
Students will:

- Understand our three zones.
- Develop the skill of recognizing which zone they are in at any given moment through tracking.
- Develop the skill of returning to the resilient zone using resourcing and grounding.

### MATERIALS REQUIRED

- The resilient zone pre-drawn out on chart paper/ white board
- Enough copies of the provided story to distribute to pairs or trios.
- For optional insight activity: another story to diagram

### PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Self-Regulation  
(1E)

### ENDURING CAPABILITIES

- 1A.1: Attending to Our Body and Sensations
- 1E.1: Balancing the Body

### LENGTH

30 minutes

### CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“I’ll talk us through the check-in and then you can share out loud at the end.*
- *Take a moment to give your attention to the sensations inside your body. You might want to check how much energy you have, whether you are feeling heavier or lighter, warmer, or cooler, relaxed and soft, or tight and jumpy. I invite you to notice what’s going on.*
- *Last time we talked about grounding – using our body and senses to help us calm down and feel better. Can you remember something you tried that felt pleasant or neutral to you? [Take enough responses to feel that most strategies have been represented.] Is anyone having trouble remembering these? [If so, you might want to make a list to post in the classroom.]*
- *Is there one form of grounding you would like to try right now? You may get up and move silently now if you wish. [Allow some time for individual choice and exploration, or you may want to choose one experience for the whole group to try.]*
- *How do you feel now? Can you tell whether that exercise was helpful to you? Do you notice any differences in your body?” [Allow students to share.]*

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### PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 10 minutes

#### The Resilient Zone

##### Overview

Here you will present and discuss the concept of the resilient zone, the high zone, and the low zone, using a story and charts to facilitate understanding and set up for the next activity, which goes through the day of a child (“Nelson”) and how that child experiences the day in his body and nervous system.

A note on safety: When teaching about the three zones, it is safest to use a proxy at first (such as the puppet, pictures, or emojis) to represent being stuck in the high or low zones and to ask students about what they think that proxy is feeling or sensing. This is a way of teaching the three zones indirectly at first. It is not recommended to ask students direct questions such as, “What do you feel like when you’re stuck in your high zone?” or “What is it like for us to be stuck in the high zone?” or “Do you remember a time when you were stuck in your high zone?” Doing so could inadvertently cause a student to experience a traumatic flashback or to describe the worst thing that ever happened to them. Similarly, it is best to avoid creating scenarios to teach this material that involve students directly simulating being stuck in their high zone or low zone, rather than through a proxy or a role play.

#### Leading the Activity

Explain that you are going to read a story together about a character named Nelson and that you are going to talk about Nelson’s day and ask them to think about what Nelson might be feeling as he goes about his day. In order to do this, explain that you will be using a chart that shows different zones or different ways Nelson could be feeling in his body.

Show a chart of the resilient zone or draw one on the board or a piece of chart paper. Your drawing should have two horizontal lines and a wavy line between them inside it going up and down.



# The Resilient Zone

## THE RESILIENT ZONE



(c) Trauma Resource Institute

Graphic adapted from an original graphic of Peter Levine/Heller, original slide design by Genie Everett

Explain that this drawing shows how our bodies, and specifically our nervous systems, go throughout the day: sometimes getting more excited or even upset, sometimes feeling more tired or low in energy.

Explain that the middle zone is the “resilient zone” (or “OK zone” or “zone of well-being” or another name your class can come up with.) This is where we’ll put Nelson when he’s feeling OK. He could be experiencing a range of emotions and feelings in this zone, but his body is still healthy and he can make good decisions. He can be OK sad or OK mad and still be in his resilient zone/OK zone.

You can explain that “resilient” means the ability to deal with and handle difficulties; the ability to bounce back; inner strength, fortitude, or toughness.

Draw the lightning bolt symbol (or some other symbol) to represent the stressor or trigger. Explain that sometimes things happen that upset

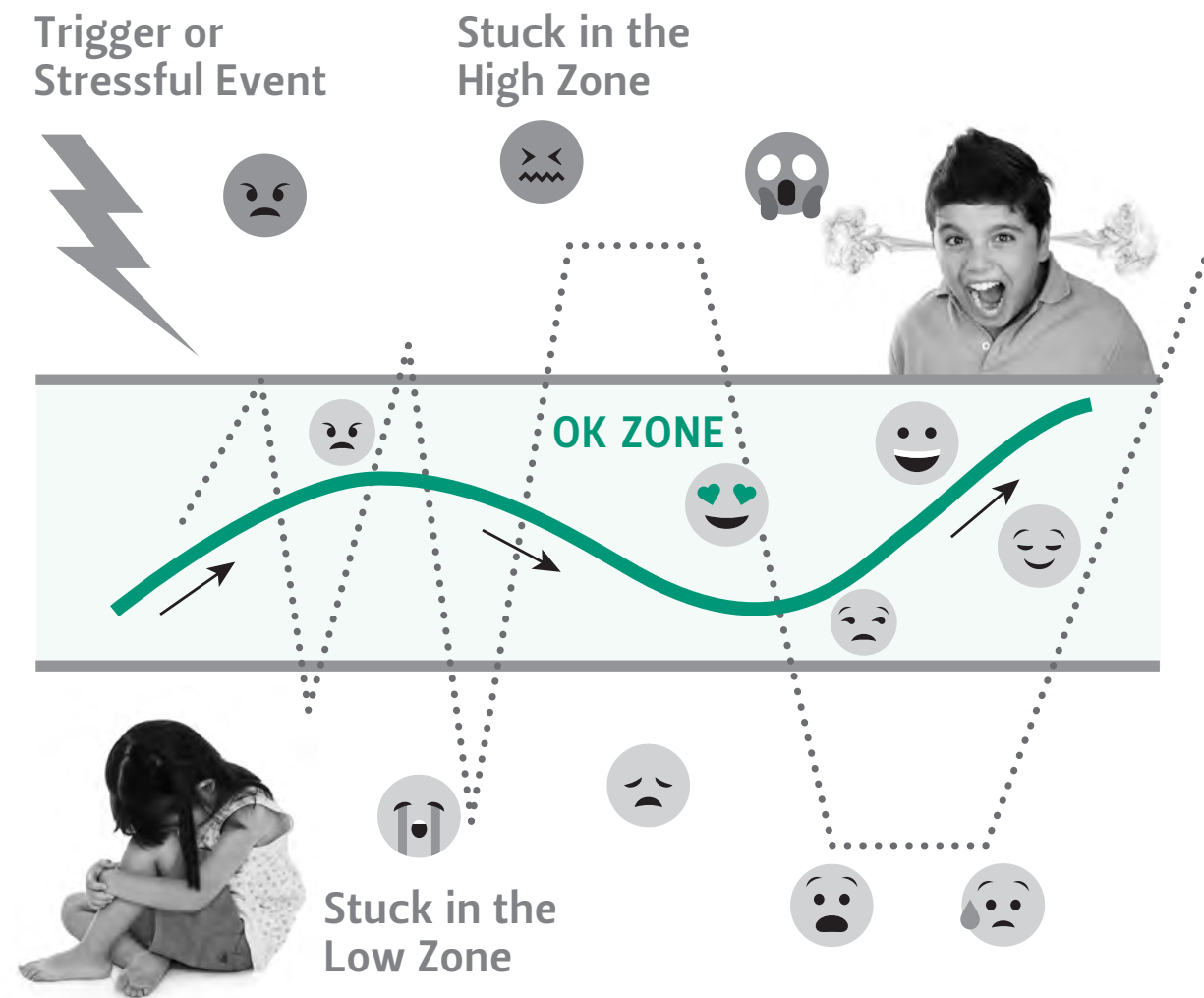
Nelson or make him feel less safe. If we come across something like this in the story, we can use a lightning bolt to indicate that something might be stressing Nelson. This might even knock Nelson out of his resilient zone. If that happens, he could get stuck in the high or low zone.

Now add two pictures that represent a child being stuck in the high zone or low zone, such as the ones provided in the graphic. (You may print out the accompanying graphic and use that instead.)

Ask your students what they think the boy in the high zone is feeling – really angry, upset nervous, anxious? If Nelson gets stuck in the high zone, what might he sense on the inside?

You may need to provide examples first. Write down the words they give you, using a different color (such as red) for sensation words. Then repeat this with the low zone. What do they think the girl in the low zone is feeling – sad, tired, alone? If Nelson were to get stuck in the low zone, what





might he sense on the inside? Write down the words they give you, using a different color for sensation words.

Then tell the story of Nelson included in the sample script below, pausing to check (a) what the students think Nelson might be sensing in his body; (b) where he might be on the resilient zone chart; (c) what he could do to get back to the resilient zone or stay there.

Make sure to conclude the discussion by reminding the students that we have already learned a lot

of skills that we can use to return to our resilient zone. Invite them to resource and/or ground as you end the discussion.

#### Sample script

- *"We've been learning about our bodies and in particular our nervous system.*
- *What have we learned that our nervous system does?*
- *We've been paying attention to our sensations. And we've learned how to calm ourselves using resourcing, grounding and Help Now! strategies.*

# The Resilient Zone

- We're going to read a story together about a character named Nelson.
- Nelson is the same age as most of you. He also goes to a school like you, and we're going to work to understand the nervous system better by thinking about what Nelson goes through in a day.
- To do that we're going to use a picture that is helpful for understanding our nervous system. This picture shows us what Nelson's nervous system is doing as he goes about his day.
- This middle part is called our resilient zone [or OK zone or zone of well-being.] That's because in the middle here, Nelson's body is feeling resilient.
- Has anyone heard the word "resilient"? Who can take a guess at what the meaning is? [Allow students to share.]
- Resilient means we are strong on the inside, we are in control and we can handle any difficulties. Even if difficult things happen, since we are resilient, we can bounce back and be in control again.
- When we're in our resilient zone, we might have some difficulties, but we can deal with them because we have inner strength. We are not super stressed-out or super troubled because we have learned how to get our bodies and minds into a better place that helps us feel better.
- How do you think Nelson feels in his body when he's here in this zone?
- Through the day we might go up and down [draw a wavy line in the resilient zone]. The line going up means we might get excited and have lots of energy, or the line going down means we might get sleepy or be a bit low in energy. But we can still do that in our resilient zone.
- But then something scary happens or something we don't like [draw or point to the lightning bolt]. And it knocks us out of our resilient zone. And we might get stuck in our high zone.
- How do you think this boy [on the graphic] feels when he gets stuck in his high zone? [Allow responses.]
- Yes, many of you noted what it feels like to be stuck in the high zone – he doesn't like it. He feels anxious and scared. He also might feel angry and upset! He feels out of control, like he doesn't know what he's going to do. He feels a lot of stress in the high zone. And sometimes feeling a lot of stress can make him go to the low zone as well.
- How do you think that girl who is stuck in the low zone is feeling? [Allow responses.]
- Yes, many of you noted what it feels like in the low zone – she might feel low in energy and sad. She just doesn't feel like doing things. She doesn't feel like playing the games she usually likes; she's just not interested. She may just want to be alone. She may feel lonely, even if other people are around. She thinks it feels bad to be stuck in the low zone and she feels better when she can get back to the resilient zone."

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## INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 12 minutes

### Nelson's Day

#### Overview

The purpose of this activity is to go through Nelson's day, which is a typical day in the life of a child roughly the same age your students. A sample script is provided for you, but before doing this activity you should feel free to change it to fit the typical experiences your own students might have so that they can best relate to what Nelson is going through.

[Note that once you go through this exercise once with your students, they should be able to do a similar exercise with any story that you read to them or tell them: that is, they will be able to tell you what the character(s) is feeling in his or her body and where they might be in their resilient zone (or out of it).]

As you read the story of Nelson's day together, you will let the students guide the process by asking them where Nelson is on the resilient zone chart. Invite students to share in the job of the read-aloud if they like. An asterisk is placed at each point in the story where you can pause and ask your students to guide you as to what Nelson might be feeling and where he is on the resilient zone chart. Ask, "What sensations do you think Nelson is feeling right now in his body?" After they've shared that, ask, "Where is Nelson in his three zones?" Ask them to be specific—if he's in the resilient zone, is he in the middle or the upper part of it or the lower part of it? Or has he been bumped out of his resilient zone? If so, he is stuck on high, and if so how high? As they give you the answers, you will be drawing a wavy line from left to right that chronicles Nelson's day and where he is on the chart based on what they say. Or, invite your students to help you draw the diagram.

At some points the students may feel something stressful has happened that knocks Nelson out of his resilient zone. At those times you can ask, "Should we put a lightning bolt here? Should it be a big lightning bolt or a small one?" If your students think these bump Nelson out of his resilient zone, you will draw the line accordingly to show that. Or, invite your students to help you draw the diagram.

Also when you see an asterisk in the story and pause, you can ask your students to recommend things Nelson could do to calm himself or make himself feel better. As Nelson does those things, they may decide

that he returns to his resilient zone. Note that you do not need to adhere rigidly to every time an asterisk appears in the story. These are just suggested moments when you can pause and check-in. Invite students to suggest other points to pause and check-in. Most likely, your interaction with the students will be more fluid than this and you may wish to pause more or less frequently depending on how they are participating in the activity. (Let them know you will be pausing at the asterisks, and possibly elsewhere, since they will be reading along.)

At the end, you will ask them to look at the whole picture and share what they notice. Lastly, explore the idea that if Nelson thinks about his day, and knows when stressful things tend to happen, might he be able to prepare in advance for those things so that they have less of a chance of bumping him out of his resilient zone?

End with an opportunity for them to practice resourcing and grounding themselves.

### **Nelson's Story**

Nelson wakes up. It's so early! He doesn't have to leave for school until 8am, but for some reason he's very excited and he woke up earlier than usual. Why?\*

Nelson's mother comes into his bedroom. "Nelson! You're up early. Why don't you brush your teeth and get dressed." She begins to open his closet and say, "Would you like me to get your clothes out for you?"

"No! I can do it myself!" Nelson says.\*

"Okay, that's great," Nelson's mother says.

Nelson searches his closet and the clothes hamper for his favorite jeans and t-shirt until he finds them. The jeans are soft in all the right places, and he likes

# The Resilient Zone

the way he looks in the shirt. Then he looks for his favorite sneakers, and he finds them in the bathroom where he puts them on. He looks at himself in the long mirror and thinks, “I look good.”\*

Nelson brushes his teeth and goes downstairs. His mother is preparing breakfast for him. It’s eggs and roast potatoes, his favorite. “Yay!” he says as he settles down to eat.\*

“Nelson, you’re going to be late,” says his mother. “Hurry up and finish your food. Do you have your book bag?”

“No, it’s upstairs,” Nelson says as he’s eating.

“Go and get it,” says his mother. “And don’t forget to put your homework assignment in it.”

“But I’m still eating!” says Nelson. He is enjoying his food so much.

“You have to go and get it now or you’ll be late,” says his mother. “Go now.”\*

Nelson has to take a bus to school. He almost misses the bus! But he gets out just in time to catch it. When he finally gets on the bus and sits down next to his friend Arya, he says, “Phew! I just made it!”\*

Nelson arrives at school and goes to his classroom. The teacher comes in and has all the students sit in a circle.

“Now it’s time for us to show our assignments,” the teacher says. “Remember I gave you some homework to do?”

Nelson suddenly remembers that the teacher gave them some homework to do, but he didn’t do it.

“Oh no,” he thinks. “How did I forget about that again?”

“Let’s go in a circle,” the teacher says. One by one, each student shows their homework. Nelson knows it’s going to be his turn soon.

“Now it’s your turn, Nelson,” says the teacher and points at him.\*

“I didn’t do it,” said Nelson. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t worry,” says the teacher and smiles at him kindly. “You can bring it tomorrow.”\*

Nelson sees that a few other students also didn’t do their homework, and the teacher tells them that they too can bring theirs tomorrow.\*

At lunchtime, Nelson is so happy because it’s his favorite food: pizza!\*

Nelson goes outside to play for recess after lunch, when they always have a little time to play before coming back to class. He sees some other kids playing kickball. “I love kickball!” Nelson thinks.

But when he goes over to play with them, they don’t let him play. “You can’t play with us!” they shout. “You’re no good!”

Nelson is surprised and sad. He goes off by himself and stands at the edge of the playground. Suddenly he doesn’t feel like playing with anyone any more. His whole body suddenly feels very heavy.\*

Then Nelson’s friend Theresa comes over to him.

“Hey, Nelson,” she says, “we’re playing kickball too. Won’t you come and play with us? We’d love to have you on our team!”

“Really?” says Nelson. “Okay!”\*

He runs over and plays kickball with Theresa and the other students until recess is over.

At the end of the school day Nelson goes home. He does his homework, has dinner with his family, and then crawls into bed. He’s so tired and his legs hurt a bit from playing so much kickball, but the soft pillows feel so good under his head.\*

The End

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### OPTIONAL INSIGHT ACTIVITY #2 | 15 minutes

#### Practicing Naming Sensations and Zones with Stories\*

##### Overview

This activity offers a way for small groups of students to practice noticing and naming sensations and zones through the use of stories. Select a story for your class to read – it can be almost any story or you could write it yourself. It could just be part of a story, enough to give them something to diagram.

##### Sample Script

- *“In pairs or trios, your group is going to read a story together and chart a character’s experiences with the three zones.*
- *Together, your group will create a chart like the one we made together in a large group.*
- *When you are finished, we will share out as a whole group.”*

### DEBRIEF | 4 minutes

- *“Who would like to explain a part of what the drawing of the resilient zone means?*
- *How do you think we’d know if someone else was in their high zone?*
- *What about their low zone?*
- *What do you think are other words we could use to explain to someone what resilient means?*
- *Do you think most people have been stuck in the high zone some time? What about the low zone?*
- *What did you learn today that you want to remember because you feel it might be helpful sometime?”*

## CHAPTER 2

## Building Resiliency

### LEARNING EXPERIENCE

# 6

# Exploring the Resilient Zone Through Scenarios

### PURPOSE

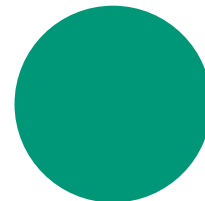
The purpose of this learning experience is to build off of Learning Experience 5, “Exploring the Resilient Zone through Stories,” by allowing students to move on a map of the three zones on the ground according to how they feel the characters in specific scenarios might be feeling. This helps them to further embody their understanding of resiliency and the nervous system, while still maintaining an indirect approach, in that you are not asking them what it is like when they themselves are stuck in their high or low zones, but rather you are exploring this through characters in a scenario.

This learning experience aims at the same critical insights as the previous, but also supports embodied understanding through repeated practice. Gradually, practicing these skills can expand your students’ resilient zones, making it harder for them to be bumped out into the high or low zones by stressors and making it easier for them to return to their resilient zone if they are bumped out.

### FRAMEWORK

For more context on the concepts behind this learning experience, please see the Framework, p. 29–31.

### PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Self-Regulation  
(1E)

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Understand our three zones.
- Develop the skill of recognizing which zone they are in at any given moment through tracking.
- Develop the skill of returning to the resilient zone using resourcing and grounding.

### ENDURING CAPABILITIES

- **1A.1:** Attending to Our Body and Sensations
- **1E.1:** Balancing the Body

### LENGTH

30 minutes

### MATERIALS REQUIRED

- The chart(s) of the resilient zone and nervous system to put up for students to see
- Colored tape to place on the floor to create the three zones

### CHECK-IN | 5 minutes

- *“I’ll talk us through the check-in and then you can share out loud at the end.*
- *Take a moment to give your attention to the sensations inside your body. You might want to check how much energy you have, whether you are feeling heavier or lighter, warmer or cooler, relaxed and soft, or tight and jumpy. I invite you to notice what’s going on.*
- *Last time we talked about grounding – using our body and senses to help us calm down and feel better. Can you remember something you tried that felt pleasant or neutral to you? [Take enough responses to feel that most strategies have been represented.] Is anyone having trouble remembering these? [If so, you might want to make a list to post in the classroom.]*
- *Is there one form of grounding you would like to try right now? You may get up and move silently now if you wish. [Allow some time for individual choice and exploration, or you may want to choose one experience for the whole group to try.]*
- *How do you feel now? Can you tell whether that exercise was helpful to you? Do you notice any differences in your body.” [Allow students to share.]*

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### INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 20 minutes

#### Exploring the Three Zones through Scenarios\*

##### Overview

In this activity, you will provide different scenarios and the students will stand along a line or diagram on the ground that shows the three zones, indicating where they think the character would be in their bodies based on that scenario. They will share what it’s like to be in those zones. Then they will suggest

to each other what the character could do to return to their resilient zone. Those stuck in a high or low zone will then do the practices suggested, and can move if they find themselves returning to the resilient zone. This is an activity you may wish to repeat multiple times.

##### Leading the Activity

Draw a visual representation on the ground of the three zones, which will be your “zone map.” An easy way to do this is to use colored tape and simply draw two parallel lines, thereby creating the three zones. The resilient zone will be the space between the two lines, the high zone will be above the top line, and the low zone will be below the bottom line. If you like you can also put signs on the ground that say “High,” “Resilient” (or “Well-Being,”) and “Low.”

Review the zones and the word “resilient.” If you feel it would be helpful, because your students don’t quite have a firm grasp on the word “resilient,” you can also write the word “resilient” on the board or on chart paper and ask students to name other words that are like resilient, creating a word map.

Next ask for 2–4 volunteers who will stand on the zone map based on a scenario you read. Explain that everyone else will be an observer. You will then read out a scenario from the samples below (or make up your own) and ask these volunteers to stand where they think the character(s) in the story would be. Tell them that the three zones are a continuum: for example, they can be in the resilient zone but towards the high end of it (for example, if they are energetic or excited, but not stressed out), just into the high zone (slightly stressed), or very far high in the high zone (highly stressed out).



# Exploring the Resilient Zone Through Scenarios

After they've found their positions, ask the volunteers to share why they are standing where they are standing (they do not all have to agree or stand in the same place), and ask them to share what they might be sensing in their bodies.

Then ask the rest of the class (the observers) for suggestions as to what the character(s) could do to feel better. They should suggest some of the skills (Help Now! skills, resourcing or grounding, or other activities.) Ask the volunteers (and observers if you like) if they would like to practice what has been suggested. Those who wish to can then do the skill. Then ask them how the character would now be feeling, and if they'd like to move to a place that better describes where the character would be now.

Repeat with a new scenario and new volunteers.

Once students understand the process, using scenarios that have actually happened in your class or between students can very effective: this helps develop the important skills of empathy, perspective-taking, and conflict transformation that are more fully explored later in SEE Learning.

Note that this activity is a soft way of exploring the zones and the practices due to the fact that you are using scenarios rather than asking students directly where they are in their bodies. Because our nervous systems are constantly reacting to circumstances, however, it is very likely that you will in fact have students who may be stuck in a high zone or low zone. Our nervous systems also react to thoughts and imagination as if they were real. Therefore, the practice combines imagination with reality, and it is good for you as the teacher to be aware of this and see that activation of the nervous system is going to happen, and that the

practices the students use can help them regulate their bodies in the moment.

## Sample Scenarios

These scenarios are offered only as examples. Please feel free to change the names of the characters to be appropriate for your class or to choose situations more appropriate for your class. Take care to choose names that are not names that your students have. While you can allow students to be wherever they feel they should be and explain why, some suggestions of typical responses are provided in brackets.

Here are the questions to use as a jumping off point for each scenario:

- *“How do you think X is feeling? Does anyone think X might be feeling something different? What are some sensations X may be feeling?”*

## Scenarios

- *“Stanley is a student your age, and he has to perform in front of the whole school. [He might be stressed out, and stuck in the high zone or low zone if he is scared of public speaking. He may be excited but in the resilient zone because he likes public speaking.]*
- *Keiko is in bed at home. She can't sleep because tomorrow is her birthday and she knows she's going to be getting some wonderful presents. [She might be excited but not stressed, and therefore probably not stuck in the high zone.]*
- *Jasmine goes to sit with her friends at lunch, but none of them saved her a seat. Instead, they all spread out at the table so there isn't room for her. She's left holding her tray with nowhere to sit. [Probably stuck in the low zone, or in the lower part of the resilient zone. Alternatively, she could get angry and be stuck in the high zone or in the higher part of her resilient zone.]*



- *Cameron shows up for school and is asked by his teacher for his homework. But he didn't do any of it.*
- *Steven is at home one evening. He hears his older brother fighting with his mother and both of them are shouting.*
- *Claire is at home with her parents on the weekend. They say, "We're going out and you are going to watch your two brothers." This is the first time she will babysit at night with no adults in the house.*
- *Aliyah is out at the mall with her parents, but they've allowed her to shop on her own for an hour. When she shows up at their meeting place, her parents aren't there. Fifteen minutes pass, and they don't answer her texts. [You can also ask where her parents may be since they are running late.]*
- *Kiara comes to school to find that her class has thrown her a surprise birthday party!*
- *Tyler and Santiago are at a haunted house. "Let's go in! It will be fun!" says Tyler. "I don't want to go," says Santiago. "No, let's go!" says Tyler and he pulls Santiago inside." [Have some students show where they think Tyler would be and some Santiago.]*

You may wish to repeat this activity a few times. Use these examples to come up with your own scenarios, developing ones that will be closer to situations your students might encounter.

#### DEBRIEF | 5 minutes

- *"Let's take a moment to bring to mind one of our resources. You can take one out of your resource kit if you like and touch it or hold it.*
- *Let's pay attention to our resource for a moment and notice any sensations that arise in the body.*
- *If you notice a pleasant or neutral sensation, let's stay with that for a few moments. If you notice an unpleasant sensation, let's find a place that feels better in the body and then rest there.*
- *What do you notice?*
- *What did you learn today that you want to remember because you feel it might be helpful sometime?"*

## CHAPTER 2

## Building Resiliency

### LEARNING EXPERIENCE

# 7

# How Compassion and Safety Affect the Body

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this final learning experience in Chapter 2 is to return to the foundational concepts of compassion, happiness and safety explored in chapter 1 and tie in what has been learned in Chapter 2. Now that the students have a greater understanding of their bodies, how to calm them, and the resiliency zone, they can connect this with what they learned about happiness, compassion, and the value of class agreements. Stress and a sense of threat can knock us out of our resilient zone, making us feel uncomfortable and actually releasing chemicals in our bodies and dysregulating our nervous system in ways that are unhealthy and can even cause long-term damage. Since students now have first-person experience exploring how we can get bumped out of our resiliency zones,

and how uncomfortable that can feel, and also know that we can help each other return to our resiliency zones through compassion, they can understand the importance of compassion and their class agreements on a deeper level. They are helping each other to be happy and healthy, and are even helping each others' bodies to be happy and healthy.

The critical insights aimed at in this learning experience include: experience a lack of compassion can make us feel stressed and unsafe and knock us out of our resilient zone; experiencing compassion can help us feel safe; having less stress is healthy for our bodies; by being compassionate and respecting others, we can help others feel safer, happier, and more healthy.

### FRAMEWORK

For more context on the concepts behind this learning experience, please see the Framework, p. 39–40.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

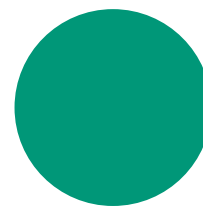
Students will:

- Synthesize the class agreements with their understanding of how the body experiences compassion, safety and happiness.
- Recognize the relationship between nervous system dysregulation and physical health.

### MATERIALS REQUIRED

- The chart of class agreements and the chart of helping actions that were created in Chapter 1
- The resilient zone chart

### PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Interpersonal Awareness  
(2A)

### ENDURING CAPABILITIES

- **1A.1:** Attending to Our Body and Sensations
- **2C.2:** Appreciating and Cultivating Kindness and Compassion

### LENGTH

30 minutes

### CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“Let’s take out our tool kits and see if there’s something in there we’d like to use. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can find a comfortable way to sit, stand or lean.*
  - *I’ll talk us through the check-in and then you can share out loud at the end.*
  - *If you’re resourcing, then pick one of your personal resources and hold it in your hands or place it in front of you. Let your eyes rest on it, or close your eyes and feel it carefully with your hands.*
  - *If you’re grounding, just bring your attention to your body and what it is in contact with.*
  - *Let’s now take a few moments to do tracking and pay attention to the sensations inside our bodies. [Pause.]*
  - *If you find a pleasant or neutral sensation just pay attention to that and watch it. See if it changes or stays the same.*
  - *If you haven’t found a pleasant or neutral sensation, see if you can shift to another part of your body to find a place that feels better. [Pause.]*
  - *What did you notice?” [Allow students to share.]*
- 

### PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 8+ minutes

#### Happiness, Compassion, and the Body

##### Overview

The point of this discussion is to help your students understand that what they have been experiencing in the body has implications for health and happiness overall. Our nervous systems are designed to keep us alive, and as such respond to perceived threats or the need to mobilize with activation of the sympathetic

nervous system. This stress response releases chemicals in our bodies and increases inflammation as the body prepares for potential danger. This is not a problem in the short term, but chronic inflammation and stress gradually weakens our bodies and makes us susceptible to a whole range of physical and mental illnesses.

This means that when we feel safer, calmer, and/or happier, our bodies are physically healthier and can do things like learn, grow, develop, rest, digest, regenerate, and heal. When we are feeling unsafe and unhappy, our bodies shut down the systems that allow us to do those things, instead preparing us for danger. It’s important to recognize here that since we are social beings, our nervous system experiences social threats (such as the danger of social rejection, social exclusion, or social isolation) as just as potent as physical danger.

When we understand this, we can realize that how we treat each other matters deeply. Being mean to someone presents them with a social threat, and is likely to cause them to feel stress and a lack of safety, making their bodies less healthy and contributing to illness. Being compassionate to someone is the opposite: it helps them feel safe, making their bodies more healthy. Since we want health and happiness for ourselves, we want others to treat us with compassion and we want to feel safe around them. It makes sense therefore to show to others what we want for ourselves: kindness and compassion.

##### Sample script

- *“We’ve been exploring the sensations in our body. When we pay attention to them, we learn if we’re feeling good, happy and safe, or if we’re feeling a bit nervous, unsafe, or unhappy.*

# How Compassion and Safety Affect the Body

- We've also learned what we can do to make ourselves feel happier, calmer, and safer in our bodies. What are some of the things we've learned to do for that?" [Allow for just enough sharing that students are connecting with the last lessons.]

Show students the resiliency zone chart again.

- "When we are in the resilient zone, can someone show us what that may feel like in your body? Why?"
- What do you think happens inside our bodies when we are in our resilient zone? Do you think it's healthy for our bodies to be in our resilient zone? Why or why not?
- What do you think happens inside our bodies when we get stuck in the high zone a lot? Do you think it's healthy for our bodies to be stuck in the high zone? Why or why not?
- What about the low zone? Why?
- Let's take a moment to look at something in our tool kit, think of a resource, or ground. Be aware of what happens inside.

For this next section, if you like, you can show a picture of the human body showing the autonomic nervous system and/or the organs inside the body.

- Scientists have discovered that when we are feeling unsafe or when we are stuck in our high or low zones for a long time, it is not healthy for our bodies.
- We get stressed, and our nervous systems release a lot of chemicals in our bodies that could make us sick if we're not careful.

- What are some things we need our nervous system to do? It's the part of the body inside that controls our inner organs, like our stomach, our heart, our lungs. It helps us digest things when we eat. It helps us sleep and rest. It even helps us grow our body to be bigger and stronger. It has to keep our heart beating and our lungs breathing and our blood flowing.

- It's the nervous system that does all these things. When we're in the resilient zone, then it can do all these things just fine. It also protects us properly against germs, diseases, and illness.
- But when we're stuck in the high zone or low zone, our nervous system has a hard time doing these things. Instead, it gets ready for danger and it stops doing things we need to be doing to be healthy.
- That's okay if there's a real danger, and we need to run fast or do something quickly. But if there's no real danger, then it doesn't need to be ready like that.
- Science also suggests that we often experience social threats in a similar way to physical threats. Fear of rejection or exclusion can be worse than fear of physical pain. Does that sound right to you?
- When we're stuck in the high or low zone, what do you think happens to our heart? To our breathing? To our ability to digest food? To our ability to rest?
- If we can't digest our food properly, or if we can't rest properly, or if we can't grow properly, then that's a problem, isn't it?
- If we are not in danger and our nervous system does not need to take action to keep us safer, in which zone would we want to be?

- *Would we want to make each other feel unsafe and bump each other into their high zone or low zone? What might we do that could bump someone into the high zone or low zone?* [Allow sharing.]
- *What might we do that could help someone stay in the resiliency zone/OK zone or get back into the resilient zone if they were bumped out?"* [Allow sharing.]

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### INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 13+ minutes

#### Acting Out the Class Agreements with Tracking

In this practice, students will work together to create little skits. If you have the ability to do so, you can video record these skits and tell your class that you'll be making a short movie.

Using the class agreements and the helping actions they created in Chapter 1, explain that they will create stories based on these agreements being followed or broken and then will act these stories out (and make a movie, if you have the ability to do so). When creating stories, be sure to use made-up names for characters that are not the actual names of students in your class. It may work to have one student pretend to be in need and have one or two other students see that need and engage in helping actions.

After a story has been created, ask for volunteers to act it out. Explain that when you say "Go!" they will start the story and everyone else will be quiet and watch. When you say "Slow Motion!" they will slow down their actions and take a moment to notice sensations in their body (tracking). You might also first ask the observing students what they think the characters in the story might be sensing in their bodies, and which zone they might be in. When you say "Go!" again, the acting students will continue the

story. When you say "The End!" they can stop acting out the story.

After the scenario has been acted out, which may only take a minute, allow both those who volunteered, and then those who observed, to share what they saw and felt. Then ask the observers what helping actions they might have done had they been in the story.

When this debrief is completed, have your students create another story if there is time.

You can repeat this reflective practice several times, each time emphasizing different class agreements or activities. You can also draw from actual scenarios that have happened in class, seeing how they relate to the class agreements and walking students through the scenario while having them pay attention to their sensations and prompting them to suggest what skills or actions could be helpful.

You can expand on this activity by having your students explore some of the specific ways stress affects the body, and there are many opportunities for infusing this material in learning about human biology and physiology. Understanding the ways stress, and in particular chronic stress, can be detrimental to health can serve as an impetus to get better at practices of self-regulation and to treat others with kindness and compassion. As you do so, however, it is recommended that you maintain a focus on resiliency, since students will not be able to overcome all the stress in their lives, and you do not wish to make them fear stress or become unduly worried about the negative impact of stress on their health. Emphasize their natural resilience and their ability to use the practices they are learning to minimize over time the harmful effects of stress on themselves and others.

# How Compassion and Safety Affect the Body

DEBRIEF | 5 minutes

Acting Out the Class Agreements with Tracking

- *“What did you learn today about our class agreements?”*
- *How do our class agreements affect our bodies?*
- *Is happiness something we feel inside the body? How do we know that? What about compassion?*
- *Is there anything you think we should add to the class agreements after what we did today?*
- *Is there anything you learned or practiced about compassion that you might like to use again sometime?”*

MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 3

# Strengthening Attention & Self-Awareness

## Overview

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This third chapter of SEE Learning builds on the previous two chapters by turning to the important topic of attention, including why it is important, how to strengthen it, and how we can use it to bolster insight into ourselves. William James, considered the founder of modern psychology, wrote, “The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character, and will. No one is *compos sui* if he have it not. An education which should improve this faculty would be the education *par excellence*.” All educators know that the ability to pay close attention and sustain attention is indispensable for learning. We also know that without the ability to rein in our attention from all the places it can wander, a person cannot be *compos sui*, meaning the master of oneself.

Attention training facilitates concentration, learning, and the retention of information. It allows one to better control one’s impulses. Attention to things like the ordinary act of breathing can help to calm the body and mind in ways that promote physical and psychological health. Yet while often told to “Pay attention!”, students are rarely taught the methods by which they can train and cultivate stronger attention. In SEE Learning, attention is not cultivated through force of will, but by repeatedly and gently cultivating opportunities for practice, just like any other skill.

Students have no trouble paying close attention to things they find interesting. The problem is paying attention when things are less stimulating or when there are distractions that appear more worthy of attention. Therefore, this chapter takes a multi-pronged approach to attention training. First, it introduces the idea of attention training and its potential benefits. Second, it shows students that when we pay attention to things, we may find them more interesting than we initially thought. Third, it introduces attention exercises that are a bit more stimulating and therefore likely easier. Lastly, it introduces attention training with objects of attention that are more neutral and less stimulating, like the simple act of walking or paying attention to one’s breath. Throughout, students are invited to notice what happens to their minds when they are able to pay attention with calmness, stability and clarity.

In Learning Experience 1, “Exploring the Mind,” students use an activity called the “Mind Jar” to explore what is meant by “mind.” In SEE Learning, “mind” is a broad category that includes subjective, first-person experience: thoughts, emotions, attitudes, memories, feelings, and so on. These processes naturally also involve the body, so mind and body are understood as interconnected. At a more advanced level, the mind also involves processes that are not always immediately obvious to us: associations, unconscious or automatic processes, and so on.



The purpose of exploring what we mean by mind is two-fold in SEE Learning: first, so that students can gradually develop a “map of the mind,” meaning an understanding of mental processes, including emotions, and second, so that students can understand what it means to pay attention to our minds and cultivate attention as a skill, particularly for gaining greater insight into mental processes. These two purposes go hand in hand: without understanding what the mind is and what it involves, it is harder to cultivate attention to it. Chapter 2 of SEE Learning, “Building Resiliency,” already introduced attention to sensations for the purpose of building “body literacy.” This chapter introduces attention training to activities and the mind itself in order to set a stronger foundation for “emotional literacy,” a topic further explored in subsequent chapters.

Learning Experience 2, “Exploring Attention,” helps students investigate what attention means, and how it involves both the senses and the mind. By learning to pay attention to attention itself, students can discover that they can strengthen attention much like building a muscle or developing a skill. While it takes practice, it gets easier over time.

Students may benefit from learning about how our brains are “plastic” by learning about the concept of neuroplasticity. This is the scientific finding that our brains are capable of changing in structure and function. A change in structure means the brain physically changes and grows (such as by becoming thicker in certain areas) and a change in function means that new pathways are created and existing ones strengthened. All this happens due to repeated practice of an activity with attention. Just like a muscle or set of muscles, our brains naturally adapt depending on how we use them and by the experiences we have.

Learning Experiences 3 and 4, “Cultivating Attention in Activities Part 1” and “Part 2,” help students explore the various things to which we can pay attention, including actions, and also *why* we would strive to cultivate attention. One reason is that attention to our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors helps us catch emotional impulses before they become problematic: that is, we become better able at catching the spark before it becomes a forest fire.

This leads to the realization that attention training, while of great help in learning in general, is also especially important in supporting self-care. The learning experiences therefore introduce students to three facets of attention training that are especially important for self-care: (1) Awareness, (2) Heedfulness, and (3) Mindfulness.

In SEE Learning, “mindfulness” means *retaining something in one’s mind* and not forgetting it, getting distracted, or losing sight of it. If one wants to concentrate on studying for a test, but

one becomes distracted by a song and starts to daydream, then one has lost mindfulness of what one set out to do. If one commits to doing something, but then forgets all about it, then one has lost mindfulness of that commitment. Mindfulness is therefore not only important with regard to attention, but with regard to one's ethical values and commitments. In that sense it goes alongside compassion and supports it. The term "mindfulness" is defined specifically in SEE Learning and this may differ from how it is used in other programs, so a section below explains these differences. "Mindfulness" as used here means a precise focus or placement of the mind for the purpose of retention.

"Heedfulness" means *being cautious and careful* with regard to things that could cause problems for oneself or others. If one becomes aware that the stovetop becomes very hot while one is cooking, then one will take a stance to avoid getting burned and will be heedful of it. Similarly, if one gains a critical insight that one has a tendency to hurt others with sarcasm or ridicule, then one can become heedful of one's speech.

Supporting both of these is "awareness": being aware of what is going on in the mind, in the body, and in one's surroundings in the present moment. Without being aware of what is going on in one's mind, one cannot notice that one is about to react in a harmful way, and therefore one cannot retain mindfulness or practice heedfulness.

Learning Experience 5, "Cultivating Attention on an Object," helps students explore how to focus their attention on a single object, such as the breath, and sustain awareness of it over time in order to build the muscle of attention. Because the breath is not a particularly stimulating object of attention, it can be very suitable for some students in the cultivation of attention. The objective here, if attention training is to support cognitive control, is to develop both clarity and stability. Here, stability means that one's attention stays on the chosen object of focus and is sustained over time without being pulled away by distraction to something else. Clarity means that the mind is not dull, lax, or lethargic, but rather engages its object of attention with alertness and vividness. Hence, one can have stability of attention without clarity (like listening to a lecture but with a foggy or sleepy mind), and one can have clarity without stability (being very alert to what is happening but having one's attention flitting from thing to thing due to distraction and an inability to focus).

As students cultivate their attention to a greater degree, these concepts become important to address. Otherwise, students can inadvertently start to cultivate a dull state of mind when they do their reflective practices, akin to taking a nap. This would be a lack of clarity. Or students could be

daydreaming, which would not lead to stronger attention. This would be a lack of stability. Neither is conducive for learning or for cultivating emotional literacy.

For many students, mindful attention to activities and the breath can lead to relaxation. For some, however, the attempt to maintain focus on a single activity or object can feel unpleasant and can increase anxiety. It is therefore recommended that you wait to implement these learning experiences until after your students have developed a degree of familiarity with the practices covered in Chapter 2, “Building Resiliency.” Those practices can lead to a greater relaxation in the body that then makes the cultivation of attention easier, and they also give students valuable tools for self-regulation should focused attention lead to anxiety. As noted in Chapter 2, the resiliency skills also become part of students’ toolkits to assist them when they are experiencing difficulties. Teachers are encouraged to always provide choice, so that students can disengage from specific practices if necessary or choose activities that are most helpful to them.

Learning Experience 6, “Self-Awareness,” further explores the relationship between the cultivation of attention and an increase in self-awareness. Up to this point, previous learning experiences have covered attention to the senses, to sensations, to activities, and to a particular object, such as the breath. This final learning experience explores using attention to look at the mind itself. Just as students can learn to pay attention to external things, they can also learn to pay attention to their own thoughts, emotions, and feelings. This is called meta-awareness or meta-cognition.

This learning experience introduces the practice of paying attention to the mind itself non-judgmentally. It also starts students on the journey of developing a “map of the mind,” whereby they create for themselves the categories of their experience and how they relate to each other: attention, awareness, sensations, emotions, thoughts, reactions, and behaviors.

Learning to observe one’s thoughts and emotions without immediate judgment and reaction serves to help create a “gap” between stimulus and response. This is very important for impulse control. As Viktor Frankl, author of the classic work *Man’s Search for Meaning*, writes, “Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

### **A Note on the Term “Mindfulness”**

The term “mindfulness” has become very popular over the past decade and is now applied to a variety of things and a variety of practices, many of them quite distinct from historical origins. One of the most popular definitions of mindfulness describes it as a type of non-judgmental awareness

of the present moment. Many have argued over whether mindfulness is a spiritual practice, a secular one, or both; or whether it necessarily involves meditation or can be cultivated without meditation. Because of this ongoing debate, SEE Learning chooses to focus more specifically on attention, a faculty that everyone has, and that has been closely studied by psychology and neuroscience for decades. While some may question the universality of the term “mindfulness,” there is no question about the universality of attention.

In some mindfulness programs, mindfulness is described as present-moment non-judgmental awareness. In SEE Learning, mindfulness refers to the ability to remain mindful of something of value, to keep it in mind, and to not forget it or be distracted from it. It is similar to the idea of retention. For example, if I need to remember my keys, it is mindfulness that helps me do so; if I forget my keys, it is because I had a lapse of mindfulness. More importantly, students will later learn that one can also be mindful of one’s values and commitments; indeed, this is vital to developing ethical literacy. Mindfulness is one of the key things that helps us stay true to our values and act accordingly, whereas “forgetting ourselves” is a common cause of acting out of alignment with our values.

SEE Learning also retains the term “mindfulness” in describing well-known practices such as “mindful listening,” “mindful walking,” etc., because they are common conventions. If your school prefers, however, you can substitute other terms such as “active or attentive listening,” “attentive eating” or “attentive walking.” Whichever term you find best for your situation, what is important is that students come to understand the value of cultivating attention and using that attention to develop discernment with regard to their internal and external situations.

### **Student Personal Practice**

Like any skill, attention training takes time and repeated practice. This practice can be informal, such as having an intention to pay attention to what one is doing in general, or they can be more formal. A number of reflective practices are included here as examples of formal practice, and you can focus on the ones that your students enjoy most. You can start with very short sessions of only a few minutes each and then gradually build up as appropriate for your class. It is likely that the more familiar your students are with the practices in Chapter 2, “Building Resiliency,” the easier it will be for them to engage in the attention training practices of this chapter. It is suggested that you begin your practices first with a grounding / resourcing activity and then move into an attention training activity. Remember that just as with the practices of Chapter 2, student preferences with regard to individual practices may differ. Be open to students choosing an attention training practice that best fits them.

Like any skill, attention can be cultivated but will take time. Although there are 7 learning experiences in this chapter, your students are unlikely to gain proficiency in the skills and practices in only 7 sessions. Repetition is essential, and patience is a virtue. Be on the lookout for students sharing their experiences of insights or gained proficiency that may come from the practices you are doing with them. For example, a student may share that they reacted differently to a tense situation or noticed something different in their emotions or thoughts. These are common experiences when one begins to cultivate attention and pay more attention to one's mind.

### **Teacher Personal Practice**

Your own personal practice of attention training and mindfulness will give you more confidence when leading your students, particularly when it comes to the reflective practices. There are a host of resources online for cultivating a personal mindfulness or focused attention practice, and the SEE Learning website will include recommendations of such resources.

### **Further Reading and Resources**

For further reading on neuroplasticity and attention training, we recommend Sharon Begley's book, *Train Your Mind Change Your Brain*.

## CHAPTER 3

## Strengthening Attention & Self-Awareness

### LEARNING EXPERIENCE

1

# Exploring the Mind

### PURPOSE

This learning experience uses a story and a “mind jar” to explore what goes on in our minds. In SEE Learning, “mind” is a broad category that involves our first-person experience of the world, including feelings, emotions, thoughts, memories, hopes and fears, our imagination, and so on. The mind is also what we use to pay attention to - or to be mindful of - things. Students also create two illustrated mind jars of their own in groups to show what might be in their minds when they are feeling stirred up and anxious, as opposed to when they are feeling calmer and more relaxed.

The critical insights aimed at in this activity are: (1) there are many things that go on in our minds, including thoughts, emotions, memories, feelings, hopes, fears, and more; (2) when agitated, our minds can become cloudy, making it hard for us to see what is going on inside us or around us; (3) we can cultivate greater clarity of mind by not agitating it and instead developing focus and attention; (4) when our mind is calm, things in our mind become more clear.

### FRAMEWORK

See pp. -- of the framework.

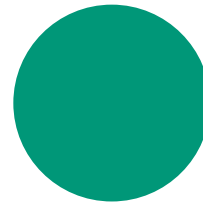
### LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will explore what we mean by “mind” and the ways we can categorize mental experience
- Students will learn that our mind can be relatively clear or cloudy, making it easier or harder to discern what is happening in our minds
- Students will learn that we can calm and stabilize the mind by allowing it to relax and settle
- Students will explore the similarities we share with regard to our minds and mental experiences

### LENGTH

30 minutes

### PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Attention and Self-Awareness  
(1A)

### ENDURING LEARNING CAPABILITIES

- **1A.3:** Map of the Mind

### MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Water in a large, clear glass (pint) jar with lid, small containers with sand, pebbles, small glass stones or glitter if available (or other materials with some that sink and some that float). A spoon to stir with. A small stool or table to put the jar on at eye level so the class can watch it.

## CHECK-IN | 5 minutes

- *"Let's start with some resourcing. If you like you can take out a resource from your treasure chest or you can just imagine your resource."*
- *If someone did something kind for your recently, or if you were kind to someone else, you can feel free to use that as your resource.*
- *If you'd rather do grounding, you can find a comfortable way to sit or something comfortable to hold or touch.*
- *Let's now take a few moments to think about our resource or pay attention to our grounding. [Pause.]*
- *Now let's do tracking and pay attention to the sensations inside our bodies.*
- *If you find a pleasant or neutral sensation just pay attention to that and watch it. See if it changes or stays the same. [Pause.]*
- *If you haven't found a pleasant or neutral sensation, see if you can shift to another part of your body to find a place that feels better. [Pause.]*
- *What did you notice?"*

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## INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 12 minutes

### The Mind Jar

#### OVERVIEW

In this insight activity, you will explore what we mean by "mind" through a story and the use of a "mind jar." A mind jar is a large transparent jar of water to which you can add sand, pebbles, and other things that can float in the water and

make it cloudy, but eventually settle down if left undisturbed, leaving the water clear. The mind jar serves as a visual metaphor for how our minds become clearer when we let them settle.

#### Content to be Introduced

- Our minds can be cloudy and swirling or clear and calm.
- We can stir our mind up (agitation, confusion, rumination) or let it settle.
- When our minds settle we can see things more clearly.
  - We feel calmer.
  - We learn more easily.
  - We make better decisions.
  - Our body feels more settled.

#### Guidance for Leading the Activity

- This activity uses the mind jar in conjunction with a story (you can make one up or use the story provided below).
- It is highly recommended that you test out your mind jar before doing this activity with your class.
- You can vary the substances you put inside.
- When left on its own, ideally the substances in the mind jar will sink within a minute or two, resulting in the cloudy liquid becoming clear.
- You can use a snow globe, but you lose the opportunity for class participation and the chance to show different mental activities (thoughts, feelings).

- After you finish, keep the mind jar set up, as you will use it again in upcoming learning experiences.

### Building a Mind Jar

Place a large plastic or glass jar with water on a table or in a place where it is clearly visible. Invite your students to join you sitting in a circle or in a way that everyone can see the jar.

Show the students how clear the water is and how easy it is to see through.

- *"What do you notice about the water now?"*
- *I'm going to tell you a story about a girl called Theresa. For this story, we will be using this jar to show what is happening in Theresa's mind. Can you see clearly through it? We're going to use sand, pebbles and glitter. Sand will be for neutral things, pebbles for challenging things, and glitter for nice things."*

Tell your "Clear-Muddy Mind" story. Add the materials into the jar yourself, or invite your students to add them, at appropriate times (here marked by letters in the story).

S = Sand

P = Pebbles

G = Glitter

Or substitute other appropriate substances for neutral, challenging and nice things. As the story goes on and your students start to understand the process, you can ask them what substance to add after each sentence.

- *"Here's Theresa's mind when she first opens her eyes.*
- *Theresa wakes up. (S)*
- *She likes to hear the quiet sound of the rain. It makes her feel cozy in bed. (G)*
- *Then she remembers: rain means they won't be playing sports outdoors today. She was really excited to go to the first day of sports practice after school and play with her friend Nelson. Now she feels disappointed. (P)*
- *When she gets up, her sister is in the bathroom. (P)*
- *And she can't find her favorite T-shirt with the frogs on it! (P)*
- *But she does manage to find her very favorite jeans. (G)*
- *She gets dressed and goes to the kitchen. (S)*
- *Her dad asks her if her homework is done. (S)*
- *Oh, no! She remembers he didn't finish it. She was too busy playing. She feels worried. (P)*
- *Her younger sister says happily "I did mine!" That just makes Theresa a bit annoyed but she doesn't show it. (P)*
- *She takes out her pencil, pours milk in her cereal, and starts a math problem. (S)*
- *Now her dad is reminding her sister to feed the dog. (S)*
- *Theresa tries to pay attention to her math homework, but it's hard with all the noise*



around the house and the dog barking while it's being fed. (P)

- When Theresa has done 3 math problems and eaten half of her cereal, her father says it's almost time to go. (P and swirl jar)
- "Wait! I'm not done!" Theresa says. (P)
- Her sister says, "You should have finished it last night!" (P and swirl or stir jar)
- That makes her a bit more angry. She wants to say something back to her sister, but she stops herself.
- Her sister jumps up and down happily and says. "I finished all my homework! I always finish mine!" (P)
- That makes Theresa really upset. She can't hold it in anymore, so she says, "Be quiet!" angrily to her sister. Her sister looks shocked and starts to cry. (P)
- "Theresa! That's no way to talk to your sister," her father says. He starts to comfort Theresa's sister. Theresa feels miserable. (P)
- Theresa's dad looks at her homework and says, "It's time to go and fortunately you're almost done. You can finish it in the car. Come on." (G)
- Theresa finishes her homework just in time while riding in the car. Also her dad doesn't seem angry any more. She feels so relieved. (G)

- "Be kind to your sister," her dad tells her as he drops her off at school, "she's just a small kid." Theresa nods and says, "Yes, dad, I will." (G)"

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## DEBRIEF

- "What happened in the story?"
- How did Theresa feel at the beginning, middle and end?
- What was challenging for her?
- What was neutral for her?
- What was pleasant for her?
- What else did you notice or what else do you want to talk about in the story?"

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## REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 4 minutes

### Settling the Mind\*

In this practice, students will practice keeping their attention on the mind jar for a short while as it settles. However, they also have the option of shifting their attention to their bodies--particularly to neutral or pleasant sensations--and keeping their attention on those sensations. Either way, the students will be cultivating attention.

It's recommended that you start with very brief attention training exercises like this--even as short as a minute or two--and gradually build to longer sessions over weeks and months. Where the script says "Pause," you can pause for as short as 8-12 seconds, or as long as you feel is comfortable for your students. It is also recommended that you allow students to

shift to resourcing, grounding, or a Help Now! strategy as needed. This is because if students feel dysregulation in their bodies, asking them to still their bodies and focus their concentration on a particular thing can sometimes increase discomfort.

- *"I'm going to talk you through this reflective practice and then we can share out at the end. Remember that you can always adjust your position to a better one, and you can always think about a resource or do grounding if you ever feel uncomfortable."*
- *The mind jar settles if we leave it alone and allow it to return to its natural state.*
- *I'm going to shake this jar and then we'll just watch as it settles.*
- *When we watch (or listen) to something closely we call that "paying attention". If we keep watching for a longer time, that's called "keeping our attention" on whatever it is we're watching. See if you can keep your attention on the jar as it settles.*
- *Let's watch the jar quietly now. [Pause]*
- *What do you notice in your body as we just watch it and keep our attention on it?*
- *If you find a neutral or pleasant sensation in your body, then you can shift your attention to that if you like.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can do resourcing or grounding as we watch the mind jar. You can think of a resource from your resource*

*kit. Maybe you'll find a resource that helps your mind settle a bit, just like the mind jar is settling. [Pause]*

- *Notice how the mind jar just slowly settles and becomes clearer when no one is stirring it or disturbing it. [Pause]*
- *Remember that you can always adjust your position to a better one, and you can always think about a resource or do grounding if you ever feel uncomfortable. Otherwise, let's just keep watching the mind jar. Let's see what we notice in the mind jar and in our body."*  
[Pause]

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#### **DEBRIEF** | 2 minutes

- *"What did you notice – in your mind or in your body - as you watched the jar settle?"*
- *Who had a strategy or a way that helped you stay focused on the Mind Jar? Could you share it with the group?*
- *Do you think it helps us if our minds are calmer and more settled? What does it help us do?"*

Continue until everyone has had a chance to share. Students may pass if they do not feel comfortable sharing.

## CHAPTER 3

## Strengthening Attention & Self-Awareness

### LEARNING EXPERIENCE

# 2

## Exploring Attention

### PURPOSE

This learning experience introduces the concept of attention by using the visual metaphor of a flashlight. After discussing attention and its benefits, students play a game called “I Notice, I Wonder,” whereby they pass around a novel object while sharing what they notice about it, and then things they wonder about it. This activity highlights how close attention reveals details and can make even a simple object interesting and also that we can each experience the same object in different ways. The learning experience concludes with a

reflective practice for strengthening attention using a resource.

The critical insights aimed at here are: (a) we can direct our attention and this helps us notice and learn new things; (b) if we don’t pay attention, we may miss important things; (c) we can pay attention with our senses and our mind; (d) we can strengthen our attention like a muscle; (e) when just observing and not judging, each of us may have different experiences, all of which are valid.

### FRAMEWORK

See pp. -- of the framework.

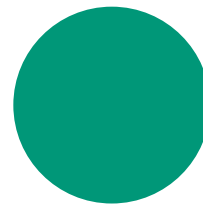
### LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will explore the various things we mean by “attention” and its importance in learning
- Students will learn key vocabulary related to attention
- Students will explore the strengthening of attention as a skill
- Students will learn that while we often perceive things differently, even when looking at the same thing

### LENGTH

30 minutes

### PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



*Attention and Self-Awareness*  
(1A)

### ENDURING LEARNING CAPABILITIES

- **1E.2:** Cognitive and Impulse Control

### MATERIALS REQUIRED

- A flashlight or other light source. One or two small objects of curiosity, preferably ones that students are unlikely to have encountered before (such as a seashell, textile, wooden mask, honeycomb, bone, piece of rare fruit, etc). A bag (optional). The mind jar (for the check-in).

### CHECK-IN | 3 minutes

- *"Let's begin by thinking about one of our resources.*
- *You can choose a resource from your resource kit, or think of a new one, or even imagine one.*
- *As you think of your resource, notice what happens in your body. (pause)*
- *Now let's try settling with the mind jar again. I'm going to shake the mind jar gently and we can allow our minds to settle as we watch it settle. We'll just sit quietly and keep our attention on the mind jar, watching it.*
- *Remember that you can do grounding or return to your resource if it makes you feel more comfortable. Just be careful not to disturb anyone else as they settle.*
- *What did you notice as we settled with the mind jar?"*

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### INSIGHT ACTIVITY #1 | 7 minutes

#### Attention with a Flashlight

##### Content to be Introduced

- We can direct the flashlight of our attention to different things.
- What we "shine the light on" can seem more interesting, more important or more detailed.
- Our attention is like a muscle. It gets stronger as we use it.

### Guidance for Administering

- Dim the lights.
- Ask students to describe an object or part of the room seen in darkness, then again when a flashlight shines on it.
- Discuss how differently the room looks when we shine a light on it, how much more we can see and how the flashlight is like our attention.
- As an alternative, use a bag with an unfamiliar object inside it and have students reach in and describe what they sense with their hands.

### Sample script

- *"Today we're going to do some activities that will help us pay attention better.*
- *You already know a lot about paying attention. You've been doing it all your life. What does it mean to pay attention?*
- *How do we do that?*
- *What happens when we pay attention? Does anything happen in our bodies?*
- *Can anyone give an example of a time when you paid attention and noticed something important?*
- *What about a time when you didn't pay attention and missed something important?*
- *So attention helps us notice things, and some of those things might be very important. Attention can be so helpful. Let's try*

*something. I'm going to dim the lights a bit."*

With the lights dimmed (but not too dark) first ask the students to describe something in a dark area. Then shine a flashlight (or some other light source) on that area and ask them to describe what they notice that they couldn't see before.

- *"What does the flashlight help us do?*
- *How about when I shine the light on something in particular, are the other objects in the dark still there, even though we can't see them?*
- *Right, they're there, but we can't see them as clearly.*
- *How can we use our minds like a flashlight? Can we pay attention to certain things closely or point our attention at them?*
- *Can we keep our attention on something, like holding a flashlight steady?*
- *Do we sometimes get distracted and lose attention? Let's see.*
- *[Draw a circle on the whiteboard and tell students to pay close attention to it. Then, stand off to the side and make distracting motions and sounds.]*
- *What was that like for you? What did you do with your attention?*
- *Do you think it's useful to be able to pay attention when you want to? Why?"*

If helpful, do a visual mapping of the word "attention" by writing it in the center of a piece of chart paper and inviting students to suggest other words related to attention. Feel free to do this with the other key terms if they came up in the conversation.

- *"Did you know we can strengthen our attention like a muscle if we practice? In that way, it's even better than a flashlight.*
- *Since attention is so useful, we're going to practice paying attention so we can get better at it. But we'll do it in some fun activities."*

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## **INSIGHT ACTIVITY #2** | 12 minutes

*I Notice, I Wonder*

### **Content to be Introduced**

- When we pay close attention to something we keep noticing new things about it.
- Everyone has their own perspective. We notice different things about the same object.
- When we look closely and just observe before making a judgment, there are no "right" answers, just different experiences.

### **Guidance for Administering**

- Have ready an interesting object (possibilities - a pine cone or seed pod, a tool, a little known fruit or vegetable, a sea shell, perhaps something that connects to a class story or area of study).
- Explain that each student will have a chance to study it carefully and share something they notice.

- Pass the object (hand-sized or smaller) from student to student.
- Encourage each child to begin with “I notice...”
- Alternatively, pass the object around in a bag and have each student reach in to feel it.

### Sample script

- *“Let’s all get into a circle for an activity on attention.*
- *I have an object here that I will pass around. If you know what it is, don’t tell anyone what it is, and instead try to pretend you are seeing it for the first time.*
- *As the object goes around the circle, we’ll each look at it carefully. We can smell, touch, and listen to it too.*
- *So we’re going to pay close attention to it for a moment and observe it.*
- *Then offer one thing you notice to the group. We’ll pay attention to each other and to the object.*
- *It’s ok to say, “It reminds me of... It’s about as big as a.... The color is like....”*
- *We aren’t going to name the object. We’re not going to say what it is until after we are finished with the activity.*
- *We don’t have to make a judgment about it either. That means we don’t need to say if we like it or don’t like it.*

- *If you are stuck, you can say “pass”, and we can come back to you if you choose.*
- *And, there’s no right or wrong answer. Just notice something about this object and share that.”*

Before you pass the object, model for students by starting yourself.

- *“Let’s try it. I’ll start. (Look at the object closely for a moment.)*
- *I notice the object is ... (insert descriptor).”*

Continue to support students by reminding them that because we are just observing and sharing our experiences, there is no right or wrong answer. If a student wants to repeat something that has already been said, like “It’s brown,” invite them to elaborate, such as “It’s brown like chocolate” or “It’s very light brown” or “It’s as big as...” You may need to remind students also to keep paying attention to each other and the object, seeing if they can notice more and more of its features.

When the object has been around once, either do a second round, or stop and discuss.

### Discussion

- *“Did anyone hear someone else say something that you were thinking too?”*
- *Did someone say something you hadn’t noticed yourself?*
- *Who can add one more thing they notice?*

Could we keep on noticing more and more things?

- I noticed there were no wrong answers. Why do you think that is? (We're describing our own experiences, not opinions or judgments.) Do you think there's a right or wrong way to experience this object?
- Did anyone get distracted? Did you ever lose attention for a moment? Were you able to bring your attention back to the group and the object?"

### Optional activity: "I wonder..."

If time allows, pass the object around again, but this time when it comes to a student, they will share something they wonder about the object. As before, there are no right and wrong answers.

- *"Let's try this again, but this time when the object comes to you, share something that you wonder about it.*
- *I'll start. (Observe the object for a moment.) I wonder... (insert your wonder, such as where it came from, who made it, what it's made out of, or what it could be used for.)*
- *Remember, there are no right or wrong answers, just your own experience. Listen carefully to what other people wonder."*

Once the object has gone around the group, stop and discuss.

- *"Did someone say something that you thought of too?*
- *Some things we saw in the same way, and some we saw differently. Why do you think that is?*
- *Why do you think it might be important or helpful to hear other people's experiences that are different from ours?*
- *Were you surprised by something another person said?*

*What is the object? Can you name it or guess what it is?"*

### A Note on Vocabulary

During these activities and over the course of subsequent learning experiences, it can be helpful to gradually introduce some of the following key terms about attention, which also prepare the students for a fuller "map of the mind" to come.

- **attention:** directing the senses or mind to one thing
- **to notice:** to be aware of something; to see something (not just with the eyes, but with any of the senses or the mind), especially something new
- **to observe:** to watch closely with the senses or mind so that we can notice things about it
- **to experience:** to sense or feel something directly



- **to concentrate:** to devote all of one's attention to one thing
- **focus:** attention on a single thing or activity; a center of attention; like concentration
- **to judge (or make a judgment):** to form an opinion or decide if something is one way or another (such as good or bad)

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## REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 5 minutes

### Settling the Mind with a Resource\*

In this reflective practice, students will choose one of their resources from their resource kits and will use it as an object of focus for a brief attention practice. This is identical to resourcing, except that here you are using the resource or the sensations that arise as an object to sustain attention on.

As before, make sure you give students the option of shifting their attention to another resource, to grounding, or to a pleasant or neutral sensation in their bodies should they ever feel uncomfortable from trying to focus their attention. Allow them to move slightly and adjust their posture also, as long as they are careful not to distract or disturb other students.

As before, where the script says "Pause," you can pause for as short as 8-12 seconds, or as long as you feel is comfortable for your students.

### Sample script

- *"Let's practice strengthening our attention just a little bit. We're going to do it with a*

*resource, just like we've been doing, except this time we're going to hold our attention a bit longer.*

- *To help us concentrate, we're going to keep our eyes on the ground or close them and we're going to sit up straight but in a comfortable way.*
- *I'll talk you through the practice and we can share out after.*
- *Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let's bring our resource to mind. And let's see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. [Pause.]*
- *If you feel a neutral or pleasant sensation in the body, you can pay attention to that. Or if you'd rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we're going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Whenever you notice that you got distracted and you forgot about your resource, you can bring your mind back to your resource. [Pause for a longer time, such as 15-30 seconds or longer.]*



- *Let's finish now. You can open your eyes.*
  - *What did you notice this time, when we paid attention to our resource a bit longer?*
  - *Were you able to pay attention?*
  - *What did you do when you lost your attention or got distracted?"*
- 

#### **DEBRIEF** | 3 minutes

- *"Have you learned anything about attention that you found interesting?*
- *How else might it help us if we practiced attention and got better at it?"*

Allow students to share out or pass.

## CHAPTER 3

## Strengthening Attention & Self-Awareness

### LEARNING EXPERIENCE

# 3

## Cultivating Attention in Activities: Part 1

### PURPOSE

This learning experience introduces three concepts : (1) "awareness" of what is going on in our mind, our bodies, and around us; (2) "heedfulness" of things that could be dangerous or harmful; and (3) "mindfulness" of what we are trying to do or accomplish without distraction and without forgetting what we are doing. These aspects of attention not only allow us to maintain our focus and learn better, they also help us catch emotional impulses before they create problems for ourselves

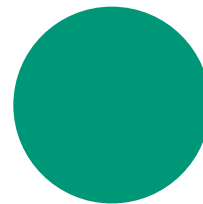
and others: that is, catching the spark before it becomes a forest fire.

The critical insights aimed at in this learning experience are: (a) attention supports learning and can be strengthened; (b) we can pay attention to things on the inside as well as things on the outside; (c) we can learn to catch impulses before they cause us problems, like catching a spark before it becomes a forest fire.

### FRAMEWORK

See pp. -- of the framework.

### PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



*Attention and Self-Awareness*  
(1A)

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will further explore the term "attention" and the benefits of attention.
- Students will learn we can pay attention to things on the inside (our body and mind)
- Students will be introduced to the terms "mindfulness," "awareness," and "heedfulness"

### MATERIALS REQUIRED

- 4 oz cups (small cups work best because there is limited space for holding); a water source, towel for spills; chart paper and markers; a piece of chart paper or a whiteboard with the word "attention" written in the center and the words "mindfulness," "awareness" and "heedfulness" written around it.

### ENDURING LEARNING CAPABILITIES

- **1E.2** : Cognitive and Impulse Control
- **1A.3** : Map of the Mind

### LENGTH

40 minutes (50 with optional activity)

### CHECK-IN | 5 minutes

- *"We've been learning how to pay attention and how to strengthen our attention like a muscle. Can anyone think of a time recently when you had to pay close attention? What was that like?"*
- *Maybe you can think of a time when you had to pay attention, but it was hard because there were a lot of distractions, but you still paid attention. Who has a moment that they can share?*
- *Remember when we used the flashlight? How was that like what we had to do when we wanted to pay attention but there were things that got in the way?*
- *What are some of the things attention helps us to do?*
- *Let's take a moment to calm our bodies and minds so that we can be ready to pay attention. Take a comfortable posture, one that is relaxed but that will help you keep your attention here.*
- *Now let's do grounding or resourcing. If you're doing grounding, notice the how your body is touching the floor or chair or some other place. Then notice pleasant or neutral sensations and keep your attention there for a few moments.*
- *If you're doing resourcing, bring your resource to mind and see if you can keep your attention on your resource for a few moments.*

- *If you ever feel uncomfortable, you can shift to a pleasant or neutral sensation in your body and focus on that instead. [Pause 15-30 seconds or longer as your students are able.]*
  - *What did you notice this time?"*
- 

### PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 8 minutes

#### What is Attention and What is it For?

#### OVERVIEW

This discussion is for exploring what attention is, what we can pay attention to, and what the benefits of attention are. You will create a word map for the word "attention" and then will ask a series of questions to explore: (1) the various things we can pay attention to, (2) what we pay attention with (our senses, our body and our mind), and (3) what the benefits of attention are. Save the word map or take a photo of it if you must erase it.

There are a variety of things we can pay attention to: (1) external things through our senses, such as another person or an object; (2) our inner sensations, such as warmth or hunger; (3) our actions or activities, such as reading or riding a bike; and (4) that which is going on in our mind, such as thoughts and emotions. A critical insight aimed at in this learning experience is that just as we can pay attention to outside things with our senses, we can pay attention to what's going on inside us (sensations, thoughts, feelings, etc). The students have already been paying attention to things on the inside through the practice of "tracking" their sensations. Here you can

expand it to include paying attention to things on the inside that include the mind and aren't limited to sensations. Some examples are: a piece of music stuck in one's head; daydreaming; getting lost in a particular thought or memory; picturing something imaginary in one's mind, such as when resourcing; worrying about something then realizing it's going to be okay; and so on.

### Sample Script

- *"What do we mean when we say 'pay attention'?" (Create a word map by writing the word "attention" in the middle and then writing out other words that students suggest around it, connected with lines or arrows.)*
- *Can we pay attention to things on the outside and on the inside?*
- *What are things on the outside that we can pay attention to? Things outside of us. (for example, the room, the sound of a fire truck, other people) (Write these on a list under the word "Outside")*
- *What do we use to pay attention to those things? (our senses, our eyes, ears, etc) (Write these near the same list)*
- *What are things on the inside we can pay attention to? (sensations, being hungry, thoughts, emotions, feelings, worries, memories, our activities) (Write these on a list under the word "Inside")*
- *What do we use to pay attention to these things on the inside? (Our body, our mind, our attention)*

- *Why is it important to pay attention to these things? (If you like, list benefits on another piece of chart paper.)*
- *What would it be like if we couldn't pay attention at all? What might happen?*
- *Fortunately, everyone can pay attention and we can all strengthen our attention like a muscle with practice."*

---

### INSIGHT ACTIVITY #1 | 10 minutes

#### The Story of Ben

#### OVERVIEW

In this activity you'll tell a story that gives an example of paying attention to one's activities, and then discuss it with your students to gradually introduce the concepts of "mindfulness," "awareness," and "heedfulness." You'll also help them make a list of examples of things we might need to be heedful of.

*"Once there was a fellow called Ben. When he was younger, Ben had a bad habit of just taking things that didn't belong to him. Some people even called him a thief. But when he grew a bit older he stopped doing that. He decided that he shouldn't steal from people, because if he did, they would be hurt and it would be hard to be friends with them. One day while out walking, Ben was invited in by some friends for a meal. While sitting at the table, he noticed the food in front of him, and while his friends were away, he quickly reached out to take some of the food with one hand to put into his*

pockets. Suddenly he caught himself, and his other hand quickly grabbed hold of the arm that was about to steal the food. "Stop! Thief! I've caught you!" he shouted loudly. His hosts rushed in, surprised. "What's going on? Where's the thief?" they asked. "It's Ben!" he shouted, holding his own arm tightly. "Ben is the thief!"

The above story can be fun to act out by yourself or with your students. For example, you can stretch out one hand and then catching hold of it with your other hand at the appropriate time. Feel free to alter details or replace the story with one that you feel may be more suitable for your students, as long as it exemplifies paying attention to the mind and catching a habitual tendency before it becomes problematic.

Another sample story you can use is the following:

*"A boy in school was playing and throwing acorns. He was throwing them away from other children, over the playground fence, when a car came by. He hit the car with the acorn. The driver got out and was upset. "Why did you throw something at my car?" she asked. The boy was in tears. He said, "My hand just threw it before my mind knew it was a bad idea." The driver nodded and she said, "Don't worry. I used to do things like that too. With practice, you can learn to catch yourself before you do something that could be dangerous. It's called heedfulness."*

After reading the story, discuss it with your students, exploring the idea of "heedfulness" and "awareness."

### **Sample Script for use with the Ben story**

- "What happened in this story?"
- Who was Ben talking to when he said, "Stop! Thief! I've caught you!"?
- Why were the other people surprised when they walked in and heard Ben say that?
- What did Ben do without thinking about it?
- At what moment did Ben become aware that he was doing something that might get him into trouble? We could say that at that moment he had awareness – he realized what he was going to do.
- We can have awareness of things on the outside by seeing them or hearing them. Can we also have awareness of things on the inside? Can we have awareness of what we're doing?
- Ben knew that stealing was dangerous. When you know something could be dangerous, you have "heedfulness." It means to be very careful.
- What are things we need to be careful around or heedful of if we are in the kitchen?
- What was Ben heedful of? Did it work?
- If Ben hadn't practiced being heedful, what do you think would have happened? What would have happened if he just stole the food without catching himself in time?

- *What are things it's good to be heedful of or careful about? (List these under the word "heedfulness" on your chart paper or put them on a new piece of chart paper).*
- *Why would it help to be heedful of those things?"*

---

## INSIGHT ACTIVITY #2 | 10 minutes

### Pass the Cup

#### OVERVIEW

In this activity, students will pass around a cup filled almost to the brim with water in order to learn about attention. Begin by filling a cup almost to the brim or as full as you imagine your students can handle. The students should pass it hand to hand around the circle. You can pause them in the task to notice what sensations they feel in their bodies as the cup comes closer or it's their turn (tracking), then notice the sensations in their bodies as they watch others when their turn is over. As some students might get nervous while doing this, make sure to remind them that it's only water, and though you're going to try hard not to spill it, no harm will be done if it spills a little.

#### Sample Script

- *"Now we're going to use our attention the best we can with a little game.*
- *Let's all get into a circle."*

Pour the water very slowly into a 4oz paper cup.

- *"Did anyone notice that they started paying closer attention as I poured the water? Did you notice what you were thinking?*

- *We're going to pass this cup around the circle and try not to spill any of the water.*
- *There are a couple of important things to remember:*
  1. *Try to keep your mind on the cup. When we do something and pay close attention to it, keeping our mind right on it, we call that mindfulness. It's not a race. Go as slowly as you need to.*
  2. *As you watch the cup going around the circle, see if you can notice how your body and mind reacts as it gets closer to you. Noticing what's going on inside us is awareness: we are paying attention to things on the inside.*
  3. *By being careful not to spill, we're practicing heedfulness. But if it does spill, it's only water, so don't be disturbed if a little gets spilled.*
- *Okay, let's begin!"*

*Start passing the cup slowly around the room. After 3 or 4 students have passed the cup, remind students to check in with their bodies:*

- *"Notice what you feel on the inside as you watch the cup move around the circle.*
- *If there are any thoughts or feelings in your mind, notice those too. This is practicing awareness."*

When the passing is complete, give everyone a moment at to reflect on their experience. Ask them to consider how they felt while watching as well as passing. Here are some sample

questions you can use to facilitate a discussion about the activity:

- *"Before we share, take a moment to yourself, and think about how it felt for you during the passing the cup game. What did you notice on the inside?"*
- *Who would like to share what they noticed on the inside. (Good! So you had awareness.)*
- *Who could feel sensations in their body when other people were passing the cup? What did you feel and where? (Good! So you had awareness of that too.)*
- *Did you notice any moments when you lost your attention, when your attention went to something else? What distracted you?*
- *How were you able to practice mindfulness by keeping your attention on the cup? What helped you pay attention?*
- *Who was practicing heedfulness by trying not to spill the cup? Raise your hand.*
- *Were you able to bring your mind back to the cup if you lost your attention?*
- *What are some other times when you pay close attention like this?*
- *This game is really good practice for other things that need our attention. Can you think of some?"*

Your students may want to try again. As an option, you can try with two cups going in opposite directions at the same time.

### **INSIGHT ACTIVITY #3 (Optional) | 10 minutes**

#### **Mirroring**

##### **OVERVIEW**

This activity involves two people mirroring each other's arm movements, first with one playing the role of leader and the other following and mimicking and then switching roles. It is helpful if you've practiced this yourself in advance. You can also practice with a student first so that the two of you can demonstrate for the entire class.

The exercise often leads to momentary experiences of close attunement, which demonstrates an aspect of focused attention: namely that our mind and body become "merged" in the activity and we lose track of other things around us. Some students may experience a state of "flow" and often it is possible to lose track of who is leading, and who following.

##### **Leading the Activity**

If you like, demonstrate with a student and yourself first. Then divide the class into pairs, with an A and B. Pairs stand, facing each other holding their hands up as if they were only an inch from a mirror.

- *"Let's begin by feeling the energy between your hands. We're going to do this activity in silence so that we can pay attention and use our mindfulness fully. We will talk together about the experience afterwards."*
- *Partner A can now begin to move one hand very slowly. Partner B is going to use mindfulness to follow and mirror the*



movement as exactly as you can. Partner B, you're going to match everything about A's hand as if you were an exact mirror.

- Now Partner A can move the other hand very slowly, and Partner B, you follow the movement, paying close attention with mindfulness.
- Now try moving both hands away and back, up and down. Move freely but slowly.
- Now let's use our awareness to notice what's happening in our mind and body right now."

Give them a few minutes to do the mirroring, then let them switch roles with the student who was mirroring becoming the leader. If there is time, you can ask them to try changing their body shape slightly, for example balancing on one foot, shifting their weight, or turning a little to the side so that they are not facing each other straight on. If any partnership has become particularly comfortable working together, it can be fun to ask them to choose secretly who is the leader and who the mirror. Then let the class try to guess.

After playing the game, prompt your students with questions like the ones for the Pass the Cup activity, such as:

- "Remember we said our attention is like a flashlight. What were we shining the flashlight on just now?
- What was happening in your body and mind? What were you aware of?

- What are some other times when you pay close attention like this?
- This game is really good practice for other things that need our attention. Can you think of some?"

---

## REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 5 minutes

### Settling the Mind with a Resource\*

This reflective practice is the same as that in the previous learning experience. You are encouraged to do this practice on a regular basis with your students to strengthen the muscle of attention.

### Sample Script

- "Let's practice training our attention just a little bit. We're going to do it with a resource, just like we've been doing, except this time we're going to hold our attention a bit longer.
- To help us concentrate, we're going to keep our eyes on the ground or close them.
- I'll talk you through the practice and we can share out after.
- Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one. Raise your hand when you have thought of the resource you want to focus on.
- Now let's just bring our resource to mind. And let's see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. [Pause.]



- *If you feel a neutral or pleasant sensation in the body, you can pay attention to that. Or if you'd rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we're going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Whenever you notice that you got distracted and you forgot about your resource, you can bring your mind back to your resource. [Pause for a longer time, such as 15-30 seconds or longer.]*
- *Let's finish now. You can open your eyes."*

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#### **DEBRIEF** | 3 minutes

- *"What did you notice this time, when we paid attention to our resource a bit longer?*
- *Were you able to pay attention?*
- *What did you do when you lost your attention or got distracted?*
- *Is it getting easier or harder to pay attention as we practice? Do you notice any changes?*
- *Do you notice any difference in the class as a whole when we practice?"*

Allow students to share out or pass.

## Cultivating Attention in Activities: Part 2

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this learning experience is to show what the cultivation of attention looks like when applied to simple activities like eating and walking, which are mildly but not overly stimulating, before transitioning to even more neutral things like the breath. It also introduces the idea of “the spark and the forest fire” as an analogy for how our feelings and impulses can get out of control and cause problems for us if we do not pay attention to them with heedfulness and address them in time. Feel free to split the learning experience into two sessions

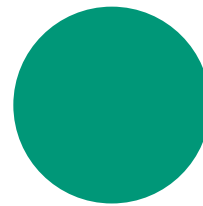
(one with mindful eating and one with mindful walking) if that seems better and repeat activities over multiple sessions whenever possible.

Critical insights aimed at in this learning experience are: (a) we can pay attention to any activity; (b) we notice more when we pay close attention; (c) attention can make things more vivid and interesting; (d) despite looking the same at first, each thing is unique and different in some way; (e) paying close attention can calm our body and mind.

## FRAMEWORK

See pp. -- of the framework.

## PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



*Attention and Self-Awareness*  
(1A)

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will notice that the training of attention can be involved in any activity we do.
- Students will practice mindful eating.
- Students will practice mindful walking, including how to lead the activity.

## MATERIALS REQUIRED

- A short video, photo or picture of a forest fire (one is provided at the end of this chapter); small food or snack items such as grapes, raisins, grape tomatoes, crackers with enough for two items per student; a chime or bell.

## ENDURING LEARNING CAPABILITIES

- **1E.2** : Cognitive and Impulse Control

## LENGTH

40 minutes

### CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *"We've been learning how to pay attention. What are some things you have learned about attention?"*
- *Have you been noticing people paying attention or not paying attention? Would anyone like to share an example?*
- *Have you thought of any other things that attention helps us to do? Since yesterday, can you share one time you used your attention?*
- *Let's take a moment to calm our bodies and minds so that we can pay attention for the activities we're about to do. Take a comfortable posture, one that is relaxed but that will help you keep your attention here. Let's lower or close our eyes.*
- *Let's do grounding or resourcing. First, take a moment to think of one of your resources that you would like to use to help you today. Raise your left hand when you have thought of your resource. Let's begin. If you're doing grounding, notice the contact of your body with the floor or chair or some other contact.*
- *If you're doing resourcing, bring your resource to mind.*
- *If you ever feel uncomfortable, you can shift to a pleasant or neutral sensation in your body and focus on that instead. [Pause 15-30 seconds or longer as your students are able.]*
- *What did you notice on the inside?"*

### INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 8 minutes

#### The Spark and the Forest Fire

##### Content to be explored

- feelings and impulses can be like a spark that quickly grows to a forest fire if we don't catch it in time

##### Guidance for Administering

- Show students a picture or video of a forest fire
- Invite them to share how a forest fire gets started
- When it's still a spark, a fire is easy to put out and even a child can do it. Once it's a forest fire, it lasts until it burns itself out

##### Sample Script

- *"Who knows what is happening here? (Show picture of forest fire.)"*
- *Does anyone know how a forest fire gets started? How big is the fire when it first starts?*
- *How would you put out the spark or small flame when it's just getting started? Who could do that?*
- *What about when it's really big like this? How would you put it out? Is it harder to put out when it's a big forest fire like that?*
- *We've been talking about things on the inside, like our thoughts and feelings. How might our feelings be like a spark that turns into a forest fire?*
- *What happens when someone has a feeling and then it starts to get bigger and bigger,*

*and suddenly they're feeling really angry or really unhappy?*

- *What could they have done if they caught that feeling when it was just a spark?*
- *How could we be careful or heedful of those sparks before they become forest fires?"*

Note: You can also share with your students the graphic novel Sparks! provided in the supplementary materials to SEE Learning or a similar story that illustrates the concept of the spark of a feeling becoming a forest fire or someone catching it before that happens.

---

## REFLECTIVE PRACTICE #1 | 5 minutes

### Mindful Eating\*

In this activity, your students will engage in a "mindful eating" exercise, which involves examining and then very slowly eating a piece of food with full attention.

#### Content to be explored

- we notice more when we pay close attention
- paying attention often increases our enjoyment of an activity
- each object and each person's experience of an object are unique

#### Guidance for administering

- Choose 2 snack foods while being mindful of allergies and student preferences
- Choose items that are likely to be pleasurable (an orange section, grapes, dried fruit, a tiny cracker) and that can be chewed or eaten slowly over time

- Put food items on a plate that can be passed
- Let students know that they will be eating the item

#### Sample Script

- *"We're going to do a mindful eating activity now. That means we're going to eat by paying attention very closely. Let's see what that means.*
- *I have some snacks here and some napkins. I'm going to take one snack and one napkin pass it on. Each of you can take one and then pass it on to the next person until we all have one. Don't eat yours just yet - just put it on the napkin.*
- *Earlier we did an activity called "I Notice, I Wonder." We all looked at an [the object you used for that activity] together. We paid close attention to it and noticed all sorts of things.*
- *We're going to do something similar with this snack. Let's pay close attention to it with all our senses and see what we notice. We can look at it, smell it, feel it in our hands or against our lips, even listen to it. And soon we're going to taste it, but not just yet. Then we'll share at the end of the activity.*
- *What are some things you notice about your snack just by looking at it? (for example, its color, how it reflects the light, its surface) Now, Look again...what is another detail that you did not notice before? Now, pick it up – anything more you notice? Now smell it. Anyone notice a smell? Do you notice*

anything happening in your mouth while you're looking at it? When you think about eating it, do you notice any thoughts? Your mind might be telling you "oh boy, I can't wait!" or "Yuck, I don't want to eat that!" or you might feel a little curious, or just neutral.

- Now we're going to eat it, but we're going to do it mindfully. That means we'll pay close attention. We're not going to eat it all at once.
- Take your snack and put it in your mouth but don't bite on it yet. Just feel what it's like inside your mouth.
- Now let's take a first bite - just one bite. Pay close attention and see what you notice.
- Now let's take a few more bites, but very slowly. You don't need to speak just yet: what are you noticing? Is the taste staying the same or changing? Can you notice any thoughts?
- Let's take a moment to slowly eat our snack mindfully, keeping our attention focused on our eating. At the same time we're using awareness to see what we notice. Let's do this in silence and raise your hand when you are finished eating.. [Wait until most of your students have finished eating, then ring the chime.]
- Now let's share what we noticed. [Invite sharing.]"

If you have time, repeat the activity with the same snack or with a different snack. Then conclude by pointing out that we can eat anything with mindfulness and attention.

- "Did you enjoy practicing mindfulness with eating? Do you think you could do mindful eating with other foods or at other times?"
- If you like you can even do mindful eating at home or at lunchtime in school. "

If the discussion of mindful eating is rich, leave the mindful walking for another day and move straight to the reflective practice.

## REFLECTIVE PRACTICE #2 | 12 minutes

### Mindful Walking\*

This activity involves having students walk slowly in a line, one in front of the other, while paying attention to the simple act of walking and the sensations of one's feet on the ground.

#### Content

- We can pay close attention to ordinary, simple activities and see them in a new way.
- Walking is something we tend to do on "autopilot," but attention changes our experience of it.

#### Guidance for administering

- Clear an open space where your class can walk in a circle.
- You may have to use an outdoor space, hall or gym.
- Make sure there are no obstacles that students can trip on or bump into.
- Set the distance between students (two to three feet between each student)

- Set the pace (one step per in-breath and out-breath may work well).
- Decide on a number of rounds (two to three), or set a timer (3-5 min).
- Lead the slow walk yourself the first time, then have a student lead.
- Ask students to lower their gaze so they only see the feet of the student in front of them.

### Sample Script

- *"Now we're going to be be mindful with something that's a little harder to pay attention to.*
- *We walk all the time, so it's hard to pay attention to it. It's easier to pay attention when something is new or exciting or fun, isn't it?*
- *Let's all get in a circle and hold our arms out to make sure we have enough space in between us. Now take 2 large steps back.*
- *We're going to walk in a circle. I will lead you in a slow walk. I might pace my walking by taking one step with my in-breath and one step with my out-breath. You can do this if you like. It's not required.*
- *You'll wait until the person in front of you moves away from you to begin. Once we are all mindfully walking, we will go for a couple rounds.*
- *Keep your eyes down on the feet of the person in front of you. See if you can keep the same distance as you walk--not too close to them and not too far away.*
- *Now I'm going to start and we're going to do the whole thing in silence, without talking."*

Mindful walking is different from mindful eating in that the activity itself can be less stimulating and even boring. It's important to cultivate attention using neutral or "boring" things, because we naturally pay attention to fun and stimulating things, whereas it is the things that we find less stimulating that we have difficulty paying close attention to.

As an alternative to leading the activity yourself, you may start with a few students and then allow students to join the line or circle as they feel ready. In this case, you would join last, first making sure that each student understands what to do and feels comfortable engaging in the mindful walking.

You are recommended to do this activity more than once. As your students gain familiarity, you can start and conclude the activity in mindful silence also. For example, you can each rise from your seats slowly and with full attention one by one as you join the line, and when the mindful walking concludes, you can slowly take your seats, again in silence, one by one, until the last person is seated. You can also start having students volunteer to be the "leader"--the person who starts and ends the activity and sets the pace.

After you conclude (such as when the timer or chime goes off), have the students remain in a circle standing and debrief with the questions below.

## DEBRIEF | 4 minutes

- *“What do you notice on the inside? [Ask specifically about sensations and where they are in the body, reinforcing learning from chapter 2]*
- *What zone do you feel in right now?*
- *What else do you notice from doing mindful walking?*
- *What did you notice when we did mindful eating?*
- *Did any of you notice any acts of kindness when we were doing mindful eating or passing out the snacks?*
- *We each received the snack from someone else, and they received it from someone else, didn't they? How many acts of kindness can you count from receiving your snack?*
- *What other activities could we do together mindfully?”*

Allow students to share out or pass.









## CHAPTER 3

## Strengthening Attention & Self-Awareness

### LEARNING EXPERIENCE

5

# Cultivating Attention on an Object

### PURPOSE

This learning experience introduces the idea of focused attention training, using the breath or some other neutral object (such as a neutral sensation) as the object of focus. This may be more challenging than previous activities, which involved paying attention to things that are more stimulating. True attention training, however, involves learning how to pay attention even when something is not that stimulating, because we already naturally pay attention to things that we find interesting. The example of training a puppy or elephant is first

introduced to explain the basic components of focused attention training, followed by a reflective exercise involving focus on a single neutral object, such as the breath, and then a drawing exercise to reinforce learning. Critical insights aimed at in this learning experience are: (a) we can see our attention strengthen gradually through practice; (b) we can learn to pay attention even to a neutral or seemingly uninteresting object; (c) our body posture can help us to pay attention; (d) attention involves using mindfulness and awareness to keep us on task.

### FRAMEWORK

See pp. -- of the framework.

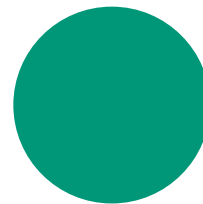
### LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will reinforce their understanding of mindfulness and awareness through metaphors as well as direct experience
- Students will experience the process for cultivating focused attention on a single object
- Students will draw their own images to illustrate attention training

### MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Drawing paper and pens, pencils or markers for drawing; print-outs of the images at the end of this learning experience.

### PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



*Attention and Self-Awareness*  
(1A)

### ENDURING LEARNING CAPABILITIES

- **1E.2** : Cognitive and Impulse Control
- **1A.3** : Map of the Mind

### LENGTH

35 minutes

## CHECK-IN | 5 minutes

- *"What are some experiences we have had together that helped us to strengthen our attention muscle?"*
- *Did anyone notice a time when a spark could have become a forest fire, but you noticed and stopped it in time? It could be something small.*
- *Let's practice our attention a bit with a resource. To help us concentrate, we're going to keep our eyes on the ground or close them.*
- *Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let's just bring our resource to mind. And let's see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. Or if you'd rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we're going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Whenever you notice that you got distracted and you forgot about your resource, you can bring your mind back to your resource. [Pause]*

for a longer time, such as 15-30 seconds or longer.]

- *What did you notice on the inside?"*

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## PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 8 minutes

### Cultivating Focused Attention

#### OVERVIEW

The purpose of this presentation and discussion is to introduce the idea that we can learn to focus our attention on a single object and sustain that attention over time. The method we use is simply to hold a neutral object of focus (such as the breath) in mind and bring our mind back to it whenever we notice that our mind has wandered or has become sleepy (lethargic or dull).

This not only can help to bring about greater calm and well-being in our bodies and minds, but it also builds our attention like a muscle. With increased attention, we can learn better, we can focus and pay attention better, we can redirect our attention easily when necessary, and we also have a tool for examining our own minds and mental processes, including thoughts and emotions.

#### Content to be explored

- We can keep our attention on a single object for longer periods of time.
- Our mind may wander or it may get a bit sleepy.
- If we lose track of our object, we can simply return our attention to the object and hold it again gently in our mind.

- When we keep bringing our mind back and holding our object, our attention gets stronger over time.
- We can feel calmer when we practice sustaining our attention.
- We can learn more easily when we strengthen our attention.

### Guidance for administering

- You have already introduced attention with the metaphor of the flashlight.
- This presentation uses a metaphor of training a puppy to reinforce the concepts of mindfulness and awareness:
  - mindfulness: being able to keep one's mind on a chosen object without forgetting it
  - awareness: noticing what is taking place in the mind (such as when it gets distracted or sleepy)
  - The puppy = the mind
  - The path = the object of focus (what we're paying attention to)
  - The leash = mindfulness (what we use to keep our object of focus in mind)
  - The kind owner = awareness (what we use to notice if the mind has wandered or is sleepy)

### Sample Script

Show your students the picture of the puppy, provided at the end of this learning experience. (Alternatively, a picture of training an elephant is also provided.)

- *"What do you think is happening here?"*
- *How do you train a puppy? Do you see anything in this picture that's being used to train the puppy?*
- *What is the puppy being trained to do? (Stay on the path. Walk along the path. Not run away.)*
- *What is the leash for? (Keeping the puppy on the path. Not letting it run away. Keeping it safe.)*
- *Do you think the kind owner has to watch the puppy? Why? (It might stray off the path. It could get into danger.)*
- *What should the trainer do if the puppy wanders off the path?*
- *If the puppy is too excited, will it be hard to train? What if the puppy is very sleepy?*
- *Is training a puppy similar to when we train our attention? How might it be similar? (It takes time and practice. We keep our mind on one thing, like the trainer keeping the puppy on the path. We are training our mind.)*
- *If we're trying to pay attention to something, like the puppy on the path, and our mind wanders off, what could we do? Could we bring our mind back like the kind owner brings the puppy back?*
- *Is it important for the owner to be kind and patient when training the puppy? Why? (It takes time. The puppy could get discouraged.)*

- *If the kind owner keeps walking the puppy and keeping it on the path every day, what do you think will happen eventually? (It will get used to it. It will get trained. It may be able to walk without a leash one day.)"*

The pictures of the puppy and the elephant are visual metaphors for attention training. In the picture of the puppy, the path is the object of focus and the puppy is being trained to stay on the path, just as we might train our attention to remain focused on an object or activity. The puppy is the mind, which is what we are training. The leash is mindfulness, since it keeps the puppy on the path. The kind owner is awareness, since it pays attention to what the puppy is doing. (In the picture of the elephant, the elephant is the mind; the stake in the ground is the object of focus; the rope is mindfulness; and the attentive trainer is awareness.)

In this way you can use the picture(s) to explain the concepts and practices you have been using to help students cultivate stronger attention. Discussing the importance of kindness also helps, because attention training takes time and patience. This will also support the topic of self-compassion, which comes in the next chapter.

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## REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 8 minutes

### Focused Attention on the Breath\*

This reflective practices introduces the more formal practice of attention training on a single object, such as the breath. The key is to sustain attention and bring the mind back when it

wanders (or keep attention crisp if one becomes sleepy). The simple method is bringing the mind back whenever it wanders.

### Content to be introduced

- We can focus our attention on a single object, such as the breath
- Learning to pay attention to something very simple helps us strengthen our attention, because it's easy to pay attention to things that we find fun and exciting

### Guidance for administering

- Begin with a grounding or resourcing practice first to bring about greater calm in the body
- Allow students to pick a part of the body where they can notice their breathing (nose, chest, belly)
- Allow students to pick some other neutral object if they prefer (a spot on the ground, a part of the body that feels neutral, a neutral sensation)
- The object should be neutral and not very stimulating
- Remind them that when their attention wanders, they can bring it back to their object (the breath or other object of focus)
- It's okay if each student chooses their own object
- Remind students that if they become uncomfortable focusing on one thing, they can always return to doing grounding or resourcing or can stop the practice entirely.



(This is very important for students who experience dysregulation when trying to sit still or focus, for whom it may take more time before they can do practices like this with ease.)

### Sample Script

- *"Now let's try to train our attention in the way we'd train a puppy.*
- *Let's take a comfortable seat and we will use what we just learned.*
- *Just like the puppy, if we're too excited or too sleepy, or if we're not in our resilient zone, it will be hard to train our attention.*
- *So first we'll do a resourcing and grounding activity to help us be in our resilient zone.*
- *Let's think of one of our resources in silence. Or if you prefer, you can do some grounding where you are sitting. [Pause.]*
- *As we think of our resources, let's notice any pleasant or neutral sensations in the body. [Pause.]*
- *If you find a pleasant or neutral sensation, just keep your focus on that. That can be your object of focus for now. [Pause.]*
- *Maybe now our bodies are feeling more relaxed. Let's focus on our breath now. We'll use that as our object of focus. If you don't want to use your breath, you can choose a neutral sensation.*
- *It can help to close your eyes. If you don't want to close them, then lower your eyes to the floor. Let's be careful not to distract anyone else, because we're all trying to pay attention.*
- *Bring your attention to your breath as it enters and leaves your body and just allow your attention to remain with the breath.*
- *You may notice the breath in your nose. If so, you can pay attention there.*
- *You may notice the breath in the rise and fall of your belly. If so, you can pay attention there.*
- *You may notice the breath somewhere else. Then you can pay attention there.*
- *Wherever you choose, we'll just keep our attention there on the breath. [Pause.]*
- *Let's just breathe in a very natural and relaxed way, and keep our attention with the breath.*
- *We should be relaxed when doing this, but if instead you feel uncomfortable, you can stop paying attention to the breath and instead go back to doing resourcing or grounding. Or if you need to, just stop and relax on your own quietly.*
- *Otherwise let's keep our attention on the breath. [Pause.]*
- *If we get distracted or our mind wanders, we just bring our mind back to the breath, just like bringing the puppy back. And we see if we can hold the breath in our mind a little longer. [Longer pause.]*
- *Now we can open our eyes. What was that like? Who would like to share?*

- *Were you able to keep your attention on the breath with mindfulness?*
- *Were you able to use awareness to notice when you were focused or when you were not focused?*
- *What sensations do you notice in your body now?"*

This third chapter of SEE Learning provides a range of attention training practices, but this particular reflective practice of focusing attention on the breath can become a foundational practice for your class. You are encouraged to repeat this practice throughout the school year. Feel free to record yourself or a student guiding the practice so that you can play the recording back. Be aware that it may take many sessions until your students gain some familiarity with it.

### **Expanding on the practice**

As you practice this more with your students, you can also introduce the idea of mentally counting the breath. This involves counting "1" in one's mind on the in-breath, and then "2" on the out-breath until one gets to 10. After that, one can start over at 1 again. This can be a vivid way of illustrating how quickly we can get distracted, whereupon we tend to lose count of where we were. Counting the breath is a very concrete way to help students reach the critical insight that attention can be strengthened through practice, because students can tangibly see for themselves that their ability to count without losing track of where they are increases over time.

As you continue the practice, you can also begin to show your students that body posture can help facilitate a calm, alert mind. In subsequent practices, you can encourage them to sit in a way that they find comfortable but alert.

- *"Did you know that the way we sit can affect our mind? If we sit like this [slumping], we can actually make our minds more dull and sleepy. If we stood up with our eyes wide open, how do you think our minds would be? Dull and sleepy or more easily distracted?"*
- *So instead, next time when we do our attention training on the breath, we're going to find a comfortable posture helps us be stable and clear, helps us be in that calm, alert state. I'm going to sit right now in that way. [Sit so that your spine is relatively upright and straight, and your feet are planted on the ground firmly.]*
- *I like to imagine sometimes that I am a mountain, sitting very stable and unable to be distracted.*
- *Sometimes to help me sit up straight, I imagine that I'm a puppet with a string pulling me gently from the top of my head straight up.*
- *And I like to keep my eyes on the ground, so I'm not distracted. Sometimes, I like to close my eyes entirely. You can do that too if it helps you to not get distracted.*
- *Shall we try sitting like that?"*

## INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 12 minutes

### Drawing Attention Training

In this activity you will ask students to make a drawing that shows one thing they have learned about attention. You may decide to allow them to choose freely or you may wish to specify more clearly what you'd like them to draw about. The drawings will help them to bring home their understanding and share with you and their classmates what they have come to understand about attention and how to strengthen it.

- *"We've learned a lot of things about attention and how to strengthen it.*
- *What if we wanted to share what we've learned with other students in the school or with our family?*
- *Let's come up with a list of a few things we've learned and then we'll draw pictures that we could use to share what we've learned with others.*
- *Who can name one thing we've learned about attention? (For example: It can be trained. It is like a flashlight. It is like training a puppy. It helps us learn and notice things. We can do it with any activity. It helps us have a clear and not cloudy mind like in the mind jar. It involves mindfulness, awareness and heedfulness, etc.) (You may wish to come up with a list that you write on the board or a piece of chart paper.)*
- *Who can name one way we strengthen our attention? (For example: By practicing. By*

exercising it. By bringing our mind back when it wanders. By not falling asleep. By having good posture.) (You may wish to make a separate list of these.)

- *Who can describe our mind when we're not able to pay attention? How might it be?*
- *Do you think we could make some drawings to share what we've learned?*
- *Let's each making a drawing that shows one thing we've learned about attention."*

Have them each choose something from the list to draw. If some students struggle to find something to draw, you can ask them to draw an activity you did as a class (such as mindful walking or mindful eating). Or you can ask them to draw any activity they like to do, since any activity can be done with mindfulness and awareness.

You can also give them more direct guidance about what to draw while still allowing for their individual creativity, such as:

- *"Let's each take a piece of paper and draw three images.*
- *First we'll draw what it looks like when our mind is sleepy, cloudy or dull, or we are in our "low zone." You can draw yourself or an animal or something else that shows that the mind doesn't have much clarity.*
- *The second image will be when our mind is wandering because we're stuck in our high zone. Maybe we're too excited or*



*uncomfortable. Here our mind is full of distractions. What does that look like?*

Allow students to share out or pass.

- *And the third image will be when our mind is balanced and we are in our resilient (or OK) zone. Here our mind is in a calm, alert state. It's not too distracted and it's not too dull and sleepy. This kind of mind can pay attention and learn anything."*

Allow several minutes for drawing and then allow students to share and explain their drawings. As they share, be sure to ask how attention plays a role in the drawing, drawing out how mindfulness, heedfulness or awareness might be present in their drawings.

You can also ask them to write a word on their drawing that explains what it is trying to depict (e.g. "mindfulness," "a cloudy mind," etc.) or the activity they are depicting ("mindful walking," "playing games," etc.).

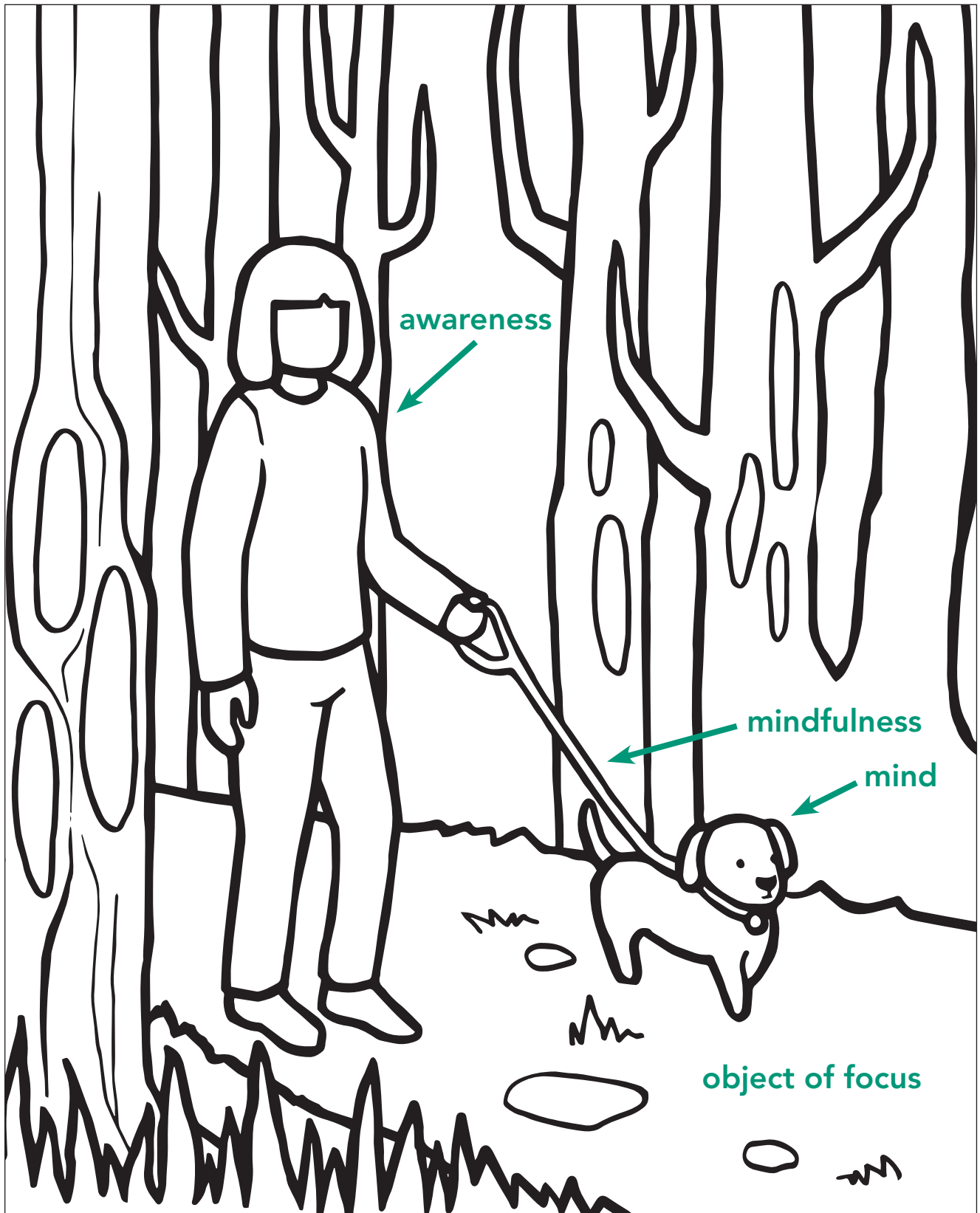
After your students have shared, you may wish to hang up their drawings around the classroom as reminders and reinforcement of what the class has learned about attention.

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### **DEBRIEF** | 3 minutes

- *"Have you learned anything about attention that you think you could use?*
- *Have you noticed any change in your ability to pay attention?*
- *Do you think your attention would grow stronger if we practiced more? Would that be helpful?"*

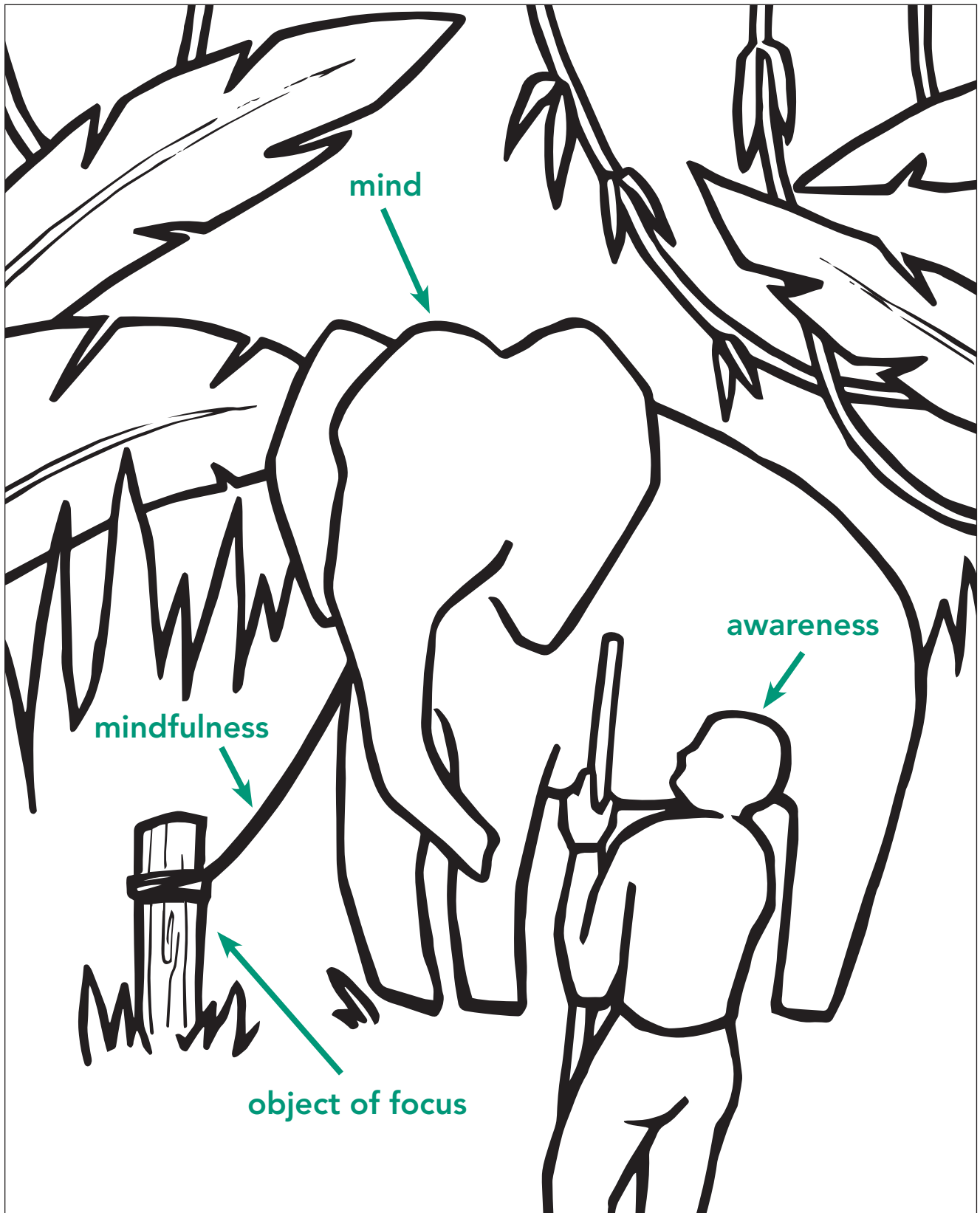




## Attention Training



## Attention Training



CHAPTER 3		Strengthening Attention & Self-Awareness	
LEARNING EXPERIENCE 6		Self-Awareness	
PURPOSE			
<p>Students have already learned to direct their attention inwards to the body and sensations. In this learning experience they will explore directing attention inwardly to the mind (called “metacognition”), meaning thoughts, emotions, and feelings. They will explore how such attention can eventually help them to create a “gap” between stimulus and response, a great aid for</p>		<p>stopping the spark before it becomes a forest fire. Critical insights aimed at here are: (a) we can pay attention to our thoughts and emotions in our mind; (b) when we watch simply observe our thoughts, we get less caught up in them; (c) watching our thoughts helps us learn about what’s going on inside us and helps us be less reactive.</p>	
FRAMEWORK		PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS	
<p>See pp. -- of the framework.</p>		<div></div> <p>Attention and Self-Awareness (1A)</p>	
LEARNING OUTCOMES			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students will learn the practice of observing their own thoughts and feelings.</li><li>• Students will notice a gap between stimulus and response, facilitating impulse control.</li></ul>			
MATERIALS REQUIRED		ENDURING LEARNING CAPABILITIES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a print-out of the sky image at the end of this learning experience.</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>1E.2</b> : Cognitive and Impulse Control</li><li>• <b>1A.3</b> : Map of the Mind</li></ul>	
		LENGTH	
		25 minutes	

### CHECK-IN | 5 minutes

- *"Let's prepare for a short attention practice on the breath. How do we want our body to be?"*
- *First we'll take a comfortable and upright posture. Then we'll keep our eyes on the ground or close them.*
- *Before we strengthen our attention, we'll do some resourcing or grounding to calm our bodies. Choose one of your resources from your resource kit, or you can choose a new one, or you can imagine one.*
- *Now let's just bring our resource to mind. And let's see if we can just pay attention to our resource with our mind for a few moments quietly. Or if you'd rather do grounding, you can do that too. Whichever you choose, we're going to rest quietly and pay attention for a few moments. [Pause.]*
- *What do you notice inside? If you feel pleasant or neutral, you can rest your mind on that.*
- *If you feel unpleasant, you can shift to a different resource, or you can ground. You can also change your posture but try not to disturb anyone else if you do that. Otherwise, just keep your attention resting with your resource. [Pause.]*
- *Now let's become aware of our breathing. Let's see if we can pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves our body.*
- *If you find paying attention to the breath uncomfortable, then feel free to go back*

*to your resource or grounding, or just take a small break, making sure not to disturb anyone else. [Pause for 15-30 seconds.]*

- *If you ever get distracted, you can just return your attention to the breath. You can also count your breath. [Pause for a longer time, such as 30-60 seconds or longer.]*
- *What did you notice?"*

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### PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 7 minutes

#### Can We Watch the Mind?

The purpose of this discussion is to introduce the idea of paying attention to our minds without immediately getting caught up in thoughts, feelings, memories and so on.

#### Content

- We can place our attention on our mind itself.
- We can notice thoughts, feelings, sensations, memories and images as they come and go.

#### Guidance for administering

- Show students the mind jar again. Recollect together what you did together in building the mind jar.
- Remind students that we are "just noticing" like we did with the object in "I notice, I wonder."
- There are no right answers. A distraction is just something to notice.
- They might notice images, thoughts, feelings, sensations.

- The image of the blue sky with a few clouds and birds is a metaphor for the mind. You may want to print it in color.

### Sample Script

- *"We've been learning how to strengthen our attention.*
- *We've learned we can pay attention to things on the outside and things on the inside.*
- *What are things we could pay attention to on the inside? What goes on inside us?*
- *Where are our thoughts? When I have an idea or think of something, is that on the outside or inside?*
- *What about when I feel something? Like when I feel happy or tired? Or when I'm upset? Or when I'm happy? Where are those?*
- *Do you think we can pay attention to our thoughts and what's going on inside us?*
- *Remember when we made the mind jar and we read the story about Theresa? Lots of things were going on and we put them in the mind jar.*
- *What did we put in? Can you remember what those things stood for?*
- *Do we have thoughts there? What about feelings? What else do we have there?*
- *All these things like our thoughts and feelings come up in our minds. How many thoughts do you have each day? Do you think you could count them?*
- *Do you think it's possible to watch your thoughts?*
- *Usually when we have a thought we get all caught up in it. It carries us away. For example, I might think of ice cream. Let's talk a moment to do this right now. Let's close our eyes and think about ice cream. I will ring the chime when a minute is up.*
- *Allow a minute to pass and ring the chime and ask: What happened? Then make this point. Then suddenly I am thinking of what kind of ice cream I want, and where I'm going to get it, and how good it's going to taste! then I might be thinking about the ice cream I had at the beach and then I might be thinking I wish I could go to the beach and pretty soon I would be carried away.*
- *But what if I just watched that thought? What do you think would happen?*
- *Do our thoughts stay forever?*
- *And if I watched it, do you think a new thought would come eventually?*
- *Take a look at this picture. [Show picture of the sky with clouds.] What do you notice about this picture?*
- *What if like the clear mind jar, this picture of the sky were a picture of our mind and the thoughts and feelings that come up in it?*
- *What do you think are the thoughts and feelings? Maybe they are the clouds here. What are other things that appear in the sky? Maybe a rainbow, birds, or an airplane?*



*Maybe even a storm or lightning bolt would appear sometimes!*

- *When all those things come up in the sky, what does the sky do? Does it change? Does it try to hold on to anything that appears? Does it try to push anything away?*
- *I wonder if we can watch our thoughts and feelings like this sky. Do you think we can watch thoughts come and go without holding on to them or pushing them away? We're going to try. We'll do an experiment together."*

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## **REFLECTIVE PRACTICE** | 10 minutes

### **Observing the Mind\***

This is a reflective practice similar to the focused attention on the breath, except that instead of a single object of focus, students will be just sitting quietly with eyes closed or downcast while simply noticing what arises in their mind, without getting involved with the contents of their thoughts and feelings. The practice here is just to watch and observe them with open curiosity and without getting too involved. Unlike daydreaming, the purpose is to not get caught up in thoughts and carried away by them, but instead watch them with an open curiosity and without judgment. Practicing this can increase one's ability to catch impulses before they turn into strong emotions and behavioral reactions.

- *"Let's take a comfortable, alert posture.*
- *If we're too excited or too tired, or if we're not in our resilient zone, it will be hard to train our attention. Just like in our drawings where we drew our minds when they were too dull or too excited.*
- *So let's sit upright with our backs straight. And so we don't get distracted, let's lower our eyes to the ground or close them.*
- *So first we'll do a resourcing and grounding activity to help us be in our resilient zone.*
- *Let's think of one of our resources in silence. Or if you prefer, you can do some grounding where you are sitting. [Pause.]*
- *Let's focus on our breath now. We'll use that as our object of focus. Remember if you start to feel uncomfortable, you can go back to your resource or to grounding. [Pause for 30 seconds or longer if your students are comfortable doing so.]*
- *Now let's practice just watching our mind.*
- *We're going to release our breath. Instead of focusing on our breath, we're just going to watch to see whatever comes up in our mind.*
- *But instead of getting caught up in our thoughts, we're going to see if we can just watch them.*
- *Let's be silent and pay close attention and see if we can do that. [Pause for 15-30 seconds, or more if your students are comfortable doing so.]*

- *If we get distracted or caught up in our thoughts, let's just remember that we're watching our thoughts. We're seeing them come, stay, and go. Let's try to do that just a little bit more. [Pause for 15-30 seconds or more.]*
- *Now let's open our eyes and share.*
- *What did you notice?*
- *Could anyone watch thoughts coming and going? What was that like?*
- *Did anyone notice a time when there were no thoughts? Maybe a pause or a break or gap between thoughts?"*

You will notice that this practice combines resourcing and grounding, attention on the breath, and then observing the mind. Each of these practices have been built up to sequentially, so if your students are not able to do this full practice, go back and practice the shorter practices with them more.

Once they can do this combined practice, you can consider making this your main practice, and repeat this practice many times with your students, ideally twice or more each week. You can then gradually lengthen the pauses until they are 30 seconds to a minute in length. Eventually you may be able to do 5-minute long practices. As your students eventually become able to do this, they will be engaging in very significant attention training, and their progress will be an encouraging sign to them that they are strengthening their muscle of attention.

## **DEBRIEF** | 10 minutes

- *What have you learned about the mind that you find most interesting or most helpful?*
- *How might it help us if we learned to watch our minds?*
- *Do you think you could spend a moment watching your own mind sometime in the next few days and share what you notice?*

Allow students to share out or pass.

