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Mindfulness & SEL Professional Development Day

Sample Lessons



SEL in Mamaroneck: Central School PD 2015

Noticing and Savoring Caring Moments

Purpose: As students begin to recognize caring moments, and as they begin to internalize the good feelings associated with them, the hope is that they begin to build an internalized resource of good feeling. This fosters optimism and resilience. Students also learn that being able to call to mind a caring moment is a tool for self-regulation and for accessing feelings of relaxation and ease. Additionally, as students begin to notice kindness, they begin to notice how good it feels to extend care to others. Noticing and savoring the positive feelings associated with extending care, may possibly incline our students to engage in kind actions more frequently.

I have been impressed by the ways the students in my own classroom have been responding to my Caring Moment lessons. It seems to me that it is changing the tone of the classroom.

Lesson 1 - Noticing Care in Books or Images

Materials

- *Classroom read alouds such as Stella Luna or Animal Babies in Polar Lands*
- *Images of care between animal parents and their young*

Objective

Students will understand that...

- *The experience of care can be experienced when we feel protected, helped, recognized, or appreciated.*
- *Care can be noticed and recognized.*
- *It can feel good to notice and experience moments of care.*

Connection

So as I was walking into school today, do you know what happened? Someone did something really caring for me. Give example.

Teaching Point

Today, I want to talk to you about the idea of care. Care is sort of like kindness. It is about being taken care of, but it's also about times when someone helps us, or appreciates us or makes us happy. Today I am going to teach you that we can find care hiding all over. And when we notice it, we can sometimes feel really good,

Exploration

Can any of you suggest some ways that you are taken care of, or that people are kind to you?

We can notice caring moments all over. We can even notice moments of care in books. When we notice care we can pay attention to how it makes us feel.

Revisit Stella Luna, another book of your choice, or look through books of animal families or images of care between animals. Pause to discuss moments of care that the children notice.

Pause to visualize one or two of the moments that you notice. For a brief moment, invite the students to close their eyes or just look down and imagine the details of the scene in the picture. Afterwards ask them how it felt.

Caring Moment Practice (Depending on the stamina of the students, this may be done as part of the above lesson, or at a different time.)

Invite students to think of a caring moment in which they felt safe, loved or appreciated: perhaps a nurturing place, a favorite pet or stuffed animal or a specific time with a loving person. Have them imagine they are there right now. Ask them to close their eyes or look down. What is happening? Who is with them? What are they seeing, hearing or feeling? What does their body feel like? Afterwards, provide a time to write or draw about their caring moment practice.

Reflection

- *Ask students how noticing care made them feel.*
- *Discuss times that they might want to use their imaginations the way they did with Stella Luna.*

- *Why do they think care is important?*
- *Suggest that students write or draw about how they felt when they visualized a moment of care.*

Further Lessons: Noticing Care In Our Own Lives

Care Is All Over - Talk to the children about how care can be found all over: in tiny moments as well as obvious moments. Smiles and kind glances are an example of more subtle moments of care that are nonetheless very nurturing.

We can go on a hunt for care right here in our own lives. We can look for big obvious moments of care and also teeny tiny moments of care.

What are some caring moments that we might notice right here in school during the school day? When you notice those, you can stop and pay attention to how those moments feel! Let's try that right now.

Invite the children to notice moments of care and remember them. Provide time for them to write them down or draw about them and put them on a Caring Moments Are Hiding All Over chart. At this phase of investigation, the focus is on internalizing the good feelings we have when we receive care from others. The children will also notice how good it feels to extend care to others.

Drinking in Caring Moments

Teach the children that not only can we notice caring moments, but we can stop, notice the caring moment and drink the good feeling in, like a cool drink of water on a hot day.

Noticing Caring Moments As An Ongoing Routine

Noticing caring moments can be woven over weeks. Caring moments can be noticed in books, during academic activities, in the halls and on the playground.

Kindness Chain - Extending kindness to our classmates: *Discuss the impact of kind or welcoming words and how they can be extended not only to our best friend but to many. Child by child, each child may offer kind words to a*

SEL in Mamaroneck: Central School PD 2015

classmate, and as a child receives some kind words they join a circle of held hands until the whole group is part of the circle of caring.

Explore the concept of self-care

Notice the ways that we care for ourselves.

Explore the concept of giving care to others

Children can begin to notice that giving care to others feels good. As they notice this and savor it, it can become more habitual - "hardwired" in a sense.

(These lessons have been inspired by the work of Rick Hanson, PhD, and the Call to Care project.)

Emergency Breath : Stop, Name It, Breathe and Think

Materials

Emergency Breath handout

Objective

Students will understand that...

- An impulse is something that we want to do right away without thinking.
- When we name our feelings and pause to take some breaths, we can think more clearly and make good decisions.
- We need to practice this at calm times so that we can use it when we are caught up in difficult emotions. (It isn't always going to work. It is something we need to PRACTICE)

Connection

Do you know what an impulse is? An impulse is when you get a really really strong urge to do something - to just do it, without thinking at all. Sometimes when we act on an impulse we are sorry later. Has anyone ever hurt someone's feelings by mistake? Or broken something when you were mad? Or taken something from someone else? Or burst into tears? Or had a temper tantrum?

Those times can feel really bad.

Teaching Point

Today, I want to teach you that sometimes we get very upset and we don't always know how to calm ourselves or to make good decisions. One thing you can do, is to use these special Emergency Breath steps. The steps are... Stop, Name Your Feeling, Breathe and calm down, and Think: What do I need to do now?"

Exploration

So I am going to tell you a story (or use puppets) about a time that X acted on an impulse and was sorry afterwards. Then X is going to learn about the Emergency Breath and things might be different...

Use an example that is not too emotionally loaded but very visceral – for instance about eating up a favorite food and then having nothing left while others are enjoying it. Tell the problem in a dramatic manner.

Then introduce a character who teaches the protagonist how to use the Emergency Breath. Let the kids try it, as you tell the story.

Then have the character go back and face the same challenge. When the challenge arises, have the character (and the students) practice using the Emergency Breath. Then have the character solve the problem in a more thoughtful manner.

Practice

We can use the Emergency Breath too. We can use it for all sorts of impulses or difficult feelings. Let's imagine a time on the playground. *Let the kids suggest something or you mention something.*

Perhaps, there you are playing on the playground and a kid walks by and calls you a name. Imagine that you start to feel really mad. Maybe you want to push them back or maybe you want to run away and cry. See yourself reacting really fast and acting on that impulse. Imagine that. Does that solve anything? No.

Now let's try this again. The kid calls you a name. Now let's try our steps. Name it. Now take some slow breaths just relaxing around that feeling. Let your body calm down. Now say to yourself, "What do I need to do now? What else can I do?" Imagine thinking, well I can just walk away. Or I can say nicely please don't do that. Or I can just play with kids who make me feel good. All those things feel much better.

Let's practice it one more time together. Walk the kids through the Emergency Breath steps.

Reflection

I have some handouts that I will give you at the end of the lesson. You can use these to remind you to use the Emergency Breath. It is not going to work every time. You do have to practice. The more you practice, the better at it you will get.

- You can use these steps when you are worked up. When are some times that you might want to try this?
- You can practice the Emergency Breath as a class. Are there times your whole class is worked up and you might want to use this?
- *Invite students to talk to their partners about times that they might want to use the Emergency Breath.*
- *Invite students to write/draw about a time this might be helpful, or about how it feels when you use the Emergency Breath to make good decisions.*
- You might want to teach this to your families. Who in your family might benefit from this?

Extensions

- *Teacher describes challenging scenarios and everyone practices these steps. The class notices times when they, as a class, are worked up or sad or silly, and then use the Emergency Breath process together. The class can then brainstorm solutions to challenging situations.*
- *Some children have difficulty paying attention to full group lessons. You may want to repeat and practice this with a small guided group.*

Feelings Go-Round Campfire

Materials

Rain Stick or Hugger Planet

Optional: Sticks, tea lights and colored plastic wrap cut into small squares

Objective

Students will understand that...

- We can be mindful of our feelings. We can notice, name and relax with our feelings.
- When we name and accept our feelings, they may not go away, but we can feel a greater sense of ease.
- We can choose to share our feelings or to keep them private

Connection

The other day, in my classroom, we had a real problem. I have these very simple books about feelings. And the kids really like them. But suddenly I looked over, and two kids were pulling on them and were practically wrestling. So I said to them, "What's going on?" And one of them said "I don't want to share this book!" And the other boy said, "Well I don't want to share it either." "Hmm... I said, "It can be really hard to share can't it?" They both took a big breath and said "Yeah. It is really hard to share." "We need a feelings campfire" they both said. And they smiled.

Teaching Point

Today, I want to teach you how to do a Feelings Campfire. Sometimes when people have important things to talk about, they may do it around a campfire.

When we talk about our feelings, breathe with them, and accept them, they might not go away, but sometimes we feel a little bit better. I am going to show you how we can notice and share our feelings and relax with them.

Exploration

We can do a campfire together today. So now, I will build our campfire. Here we are. We have been walking in the woods. We found the perfect place to stop and set up camp. The stars are twinkling overhead. Let's get really quiet and let the quiet help us build our campfire. *Teacher builds the campfire.* I want it to be really perfect so it can hold all our important feelings.

Okay. So what kinds of feelings might kids have? *Ask kids to list out possible feelings someone might have at this time of the day.*

So let's see how we are feeling today. Everyone notice how your body is feeling, what thoughts are on your mind and what feelings you have right now. This is a special quiet time.

I will pass around my special talking stick. When it comes to you just say whatever feeling you notice at that moment. Or if you would rather not share it you can say "pass" and just say your feeling to yourself. Then we will all take a breath in. You can raise the rain stick and turn it over slowly and let your feelings flow out into the campfire. We will all relax with that feeling. Let's practice that as I do the rain stick. Every time we breathe out, we just let our bodies relax with the feeling.

Practice

Pass the rain stick from child to child. Letting each child say their feeling (or pass) and then raise the rain stick as everyone breathes in and let the feelings flow out as they breathe out and relax with that feeling.

You have shared a lot of feelings. When we notice our feelings, and breathe with them, it can help us feel a little better when we are sad, or maybe even a little happier when we are happy.

Reflection

- We can have so many different feelings. What are some of the feelings that kids had just now? They will probably change over the day. Have your feelings changed at all since we started?
- Are there times in the day when your class might want to do a campfire?
- Invite students to draw and write about how they are feelings.

Extensions

- Instead of using a rain stick, students pass around a Hugger Planet or each kid helps in building the fire, by placing one stick down.
- Colleagues at Chatsworth often do this after lunch with their students.
- Ask kids to think about times outside of school when it might be useful to talk about or notice their feelings.